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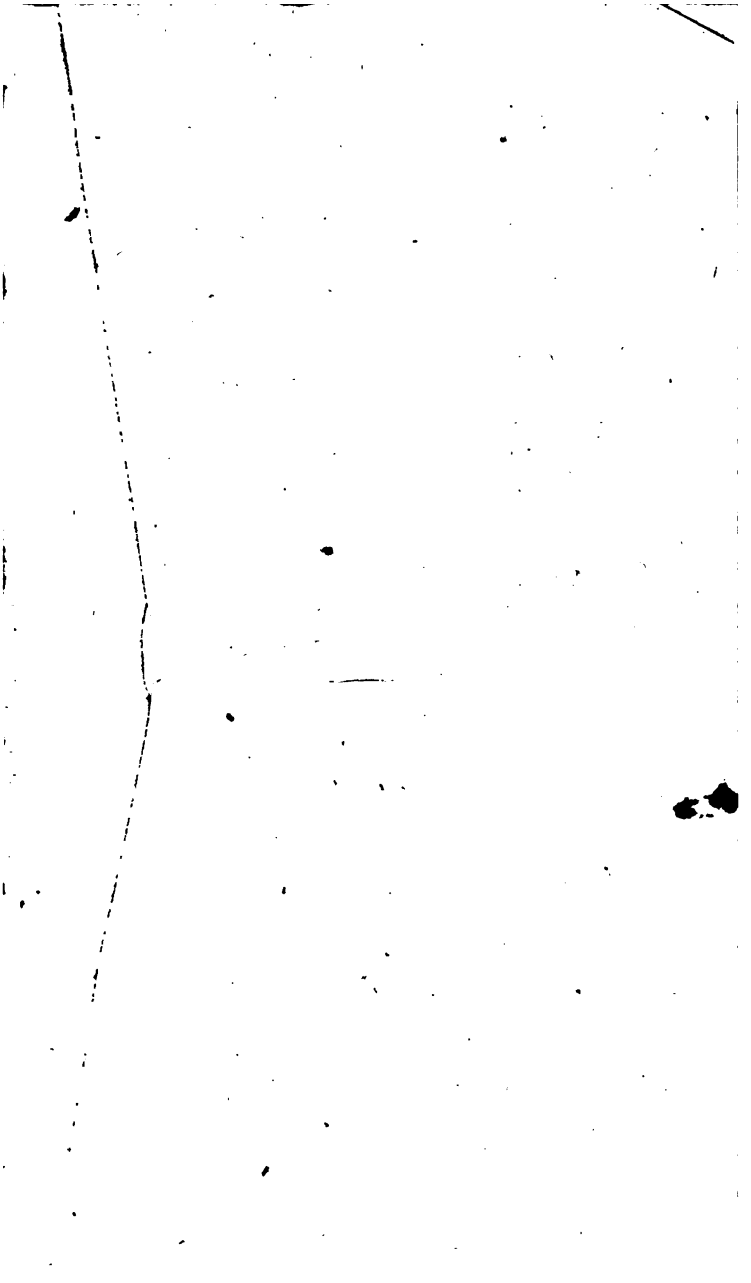

THE

# *Mysterious Florentine.*

VOL. I.

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THE

# *Mysterious Florentine.*

## A Romance,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

*BY CAROLINE SINCLAIR.*

Cast off your veil, mystery;
Show us each ghastly feature;
Pooh! not ghastly—insignificant,
When truth reveals you—such as you are.

VOL. I.

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THE

# *Mysterious Florentine.*

## CHAP. I.

SEATED on the twisted root of an aged beech, Vincent Montaldi seemed contemplating the moon as it was rising from behind the clouds; one hand rested on his knee, while the other supported his head—he started—aroused from his reverie—and hastily retreated into his solitary habitation; striking his forehead, he exclaimed in a tone of frenzy, "'Tis inhuman!—'tis brutal to fly from the voice of distress: who knows but—

begone heart-rending thought! should I go—and—ah! admit strangers; might not an investigation ensue? My vow! curst exaction!—coward, that I was! mean! base! ignoble submission! Shall the strength of this arm be restrained for the contemptible grant of a few years of lingering misery?—What can? No, not even time, stifle the keen sense of the injuries I have received. Yet, surely honor requires"—Here he paused—a loud knocking alarmed him. "What shall I do?" was the query he asked himself; for the interruption threw him into the utmost perplexity—he doubted not but that the intruder had come to demand relief for the sufferers, whose cries had penetrated his very soul.

Induced by this consideration, and banishing all wherein self was concerned, he immediately opened the door,

but receded back a few paces, with an involuntary emotion of horror—for he beheld the lacerated body of a man, supported by a youth and an interesting female, apparently of the age of fifteen.

The strangers received admittance—"I am perjured!" escaped from the lips of Montaldi, in an accent of agony that alarmed the female, whose looks betrayed her fears, lest in the wish of obtaining succour for their wounded uncle, they had betrayed themselves into the power of banditti.

Montaldi disappeared, casting, as he left the room, a melancholy look at his astonished visitors, who, with the liveliest curiosity, surveyed the apartment. It was of an octagon form, of which four sides were glass; two alabaster lamps shed a dim reflected light, eclipsed by the more luminous rays of the moon,

as her silver light entered from an open window, shaded with orange trees, and intermingled roses. An old man and woman, seemingly by the orders of their master, entered, and with a courteous air, demanded of what service they could be.

"For the love of Heaven, assist our uncle!" said the strangers; "He is dying!"

"Dying!" said the woman, in a compassionate tone; "alas! I fear I can do him but little good, for—but—do not weep, senora—what can be done, shall; and yet, as the senor says, you had better have gone to yonder monastery, you would have been sure to find relief, which I am afraid you will not meet with here; and not from the want of good will neither, as our Lady knows, for the poor distracted

senor has gone himself to fetch one of the fathers, who is as good a doctor as ever attended a patient."

"The humanity of the senor, your master, demands our thanks and gratitude," said the youth; "and since it is his wish that we should seek shelter at the monastery, however the health of my uncle may be endangered by a removal, I would rather brave the consequence, than intrude on his seclusion."

"Ah!" said the woman, "did you but know what I do, you would not think thus of Senor Montaldi—had you seen the tear that marked his pale cheek as he bid me attend the strangers, you would not think he wished you gone—but cause enough he has for his sorrow."

"That shall be held sacred by me,"

said the youth, blushing at suspicions to which the strange manner of Montaldi had given rise.

Father Asavoli made his appearance; he examined the many wounds of the stranger, which he pronounced dangerous, if not mortal.

"Senor," said he, addressing Montaldi, "the sufferer had better be placed on a litter, borne by our brothers, for in this abode he cannot meet with the attention his dangerous state requires."

"May not a removal be attended with bad consequences, senor?" interrupted the father.

Montaldi sighed as he acquiesced; the mournful pathos of his voice engaged the attention of the youth, which

Montaldi observing, his countenance became suffused with a glowing red.

"Pardon the remissness of behaviour," said he, "that circumstances can alone warrant: but I speak ambiguous," he continued, recollecting himself; "every attention that is in my power, be assured, yourself and the senora shall receive from Vincent Montaldi."

"And I trust, with a becoming sense of his courtesy," replied the youth, bowing as he spoke; "the Duca Almerini will, I am convinced, be happy to acknowledge that kindness which afforded shelter to his brother and children."

At this the lovely Laurentini made a graceful courtesy, and joined her brother

in making the return merited by the hospitality of Montaldi.

Resigning the Senor di Bartolo, their uncle, to the care of the benevolent fathers, they partook of a repast, provided by the assiduous Pauliana, during which, the Senor Ernesto Almerini related to Montaldi, the accident which had made them debtors to his kindness, and at the same time afforded them the happiness of his acquaintance.

" My sister and myself had been on a visit to the Senor di Bartolo, our uncle, for several weeks, when at length a letter from our father signifying a wish for our return, put an end to the visit. The answer of the Senor di Bartolo bid my father expect us at the expiration of a week. This night being uncommonly fine, and the moon peculiarly inviting, the senor wished to surprise our parents

by coming on them unaware, and ordering the carriage, we rode in the pleasantest manner till we came within a mile of the pallazzo, when several armed banditti surrounded the carriage, wounded the servants and my uncle, who made a desperate resistance, till overcome by many wounds, he was reduced to the state your generous compassion ameliorated."

The undeserved praise bestowed on humanity he had so unwillingly extended, excited a sensation in the bosom of Montaldi, the most accute; and again he lamented the hardness of that destiny which he feared would never wear a more gentle aspect.

Astolfo at that instant entered and acquainted the guests that attendants from the pallazzo had arrived. Almerini praised his alacrity, and returning

suitable acknowledgments to Montaldi, he once more found himself a solitary isolated being.

The charms of the senora had caused a revolution in his bosom hitherto unfelt—the usual hour for retiring approached, but Montaldi seemed immoveably fixed to the spot where he had heard the last adieu of the senora. His eyes were bent on the ground, and lost in profound meditation, he heeded not the flight of time. The varied graces of the beauteous Laurentini were still present to his mental view—he could contemplate her faultless form, unaccompanied by that embarrassment felt in her presence: the tempered lustre of her dark eyes shone undiminished, and the modest carnation that supplied the glow terror had deprived her of, seemed still to animate a set of features of exquisite cast.—"And why this strange

tumult in my bosom?—Am I not a forlorn being—an estranged alien!—the victim of a fate the most severe! Ought not this reflection to stifle feelings, honor—aye, reason bid me suppress. Oh! if such were the fruits of deviation, none would, I am too fatally convinced, transgress the bounds of rectitude,—then I should not be the very wretch I am!—You had not, * * * hated name—let oblivion inveil the sound—thou robber of my peace!—you had not thus acted!—exposed me to dangers I know not half the extent of!"—

He was yet speaking when Pauliana entered, busy with preparations for breakfast. She started on beholding Montaldi, as if she encountered a spectre.

"What, not undressed, senor?

Surely you have not staid up the whole night?"

"My good woman," said Vincent, his voice assuming its usual pathos; "let the calm and happy seek repose; 'tis not for me!"

"May the Holy Virgin grant," said Pauliana, with vehemence, "that those who are the cause of misery to one like you, may never know what it is to enjoy rest—even when they seek it."

Pleased with her honest zeal, a faint and languid smile illumined one of the most ingenuous countenances in the world. Vincent Montaldi had just entered his twenty-second year; his person was small, but symmetry itself, and the expression of his dark eyes were brilliant beyond description: if aught appeared as a blemish, it was a look of

deep dejection, which gave to his aspect and appearance the disadvantage of at least ten years. Intense thought, and continual grief at misfortunes severe, because unmerited, underminded a constitution naturally delicate; but fate, as he would say, had reserved him for more misery, and would not snatch from life a being the most unhappy. Summoning all his fortitude, he awaited with composure the events of the day, which brought, as he expected, a visit from Ernesto and the venerable duca. In answer to the many flattering things they uttered, Montaldi observed the trifling service he had rendered them, only became enhanced by the terms in which they were pleased to notice it.

He with pain discovered a mixture of curiosity that seemed blended with the profuse offers of friendship made by the

duca. This conviction kindled his pride, and his feelings shone conspicuous in his countenance.

"This man," said he, mentally; "thinks me mercenary—one who cannot perform a disinterested action; but he little knows my mind."

These reflections agitated him, which Ernesto observed, but forbore noticing: he wished not to offend one, for whom, though a stranger, he felt the highest respect.

Young and enthusiastic, Ernesto Almerini, to a graceful person united the most amiable qualities of the mind; his heart was the seat of every virtue, and his understanding well stored with whatever was useful as well as ornamental: actuated by the moment, and impetuous

in all his wishes, he never formed a design but it must be immediately executed, unless totally impracticable.

There was something even in the secresy of the mysterious Florentine, that engaged his ardent mind, and promised an inexhaustible source to be drawn from his friendship. The duca, finding every essay he made to learn more of the Florentine was attended with no success, unwillingly desisted, tendering, as he took leave, whatever his interest or fortune could procure, and received an answer, in which becoming pride and dignity were equally blended. Ernesto pressed the extended hand of Montaldi, and promised to avail himself of the earliest opportunity that offered.

Consoled by the intelligence that the senora was well (though only in part recovered from the effects of her terror)

and that the senor was pronounced out of danger, Montaldi enjoyed a temporary state of composure; when comparing the then present state of his mind, to the calm, dull, melancholy sameness of his days, he was almost tempted to rejoice at the interruption which broke upon the sad monotony that prevailed; and yet the meeting—where might it end?" was the question he continually asked himself; a question he was as unwilling to answer.

Pleased to cherish an idea that beguiled many a tedious lingering hour, and engrossed by sensations, as new as they were delightful; with serenity he had long been a stranger to, he would pace the beautiful banks of the Arno—gaze at the sparkling water as the sunbeams played upon its surface, winding its silver train down toward the Mediterranean, and smile with sweet placidity

when eve's pensive shade involved in obscurity both lofty mountain and lowly valley, then would he give pause to thought, and as the face of Nature, give silence to his bosom. But when day succeeded day, and he beheld not Ernesto, his feelings underwent a change, that from the height of bliss, plunged him into the lowest abyss of despair, however unwilling to awaken himself from that pleasing delirium, wherein he fancied happiness within his reach.

"The happy and gay Ernesto has doubtless forgotten the forlorn Montaldi! Can the impression made by the casual meeting of strangers cement the friendship, I, in the chimera of my brain, had promised myself? No; if Montaldi has excited an emotion in the bosom of Ernesto, it must be that of curiosity. Will he form a connection with one so mysterious? No; the scru-

tinizing looks of the duca his father, crushes at once such expectations. Ah! too charming Laurentini! (for such, unheard, the presumptuous Montaldi may call thee) would these eyes"—

The sentence remained unfinished, for Ernesto, the object of his reproaches, stood before him: his countenance wearing the aspect of gladness, resentment vanished, and Montaldi cordially embraced him.

"In answer to all your enquiries," said Ernesto, "I have the pleasure to inform you that the wounds of the senor wear the most flattering appearance, and I make no doubt he will be enabled in the course of a few weeks, to return you personal thanks."

"The honor of a visit from the senor," replied Montaldi, "will afford

me infinite satisfaction; but believe me, he over values the trifling service I rendered him."

"Only trifling in your own estimation," said Ernesto; "you should hear the representation made by my sister."

At the mention of the senora, the countenance of Montaldi betrayed the utmost confusion, which happily escaped the notice of Ernesto, who continued—

"My father esteems you, and admires your spirited reserve, which prevented you from a disclosure of yourself, that you might avoid the return it was his wish to make you."

"I claim no merit," said Montaldi, "for reserve to which I was urged from compulsion."

"But what you denied to interest," said Ernesto, with a lively air, "you will surely grant to friendship! Do you not think," continued he, "you treated too proudly the offers my father made you? Judging from appearance, methinks they demand an explanation from the candour of the Senor Montaldi, rather than the haughty silence he maintained, suffering him to remain in an error for which his son now apologizes."

"'Tis unnecessary," said Montaldi, in a voice scarcely audible from contending passions.

Ernesto had unintentionally touched on a chord that vibrated: he observed the conversation grew painful and wished to end it.

"Ernesto Almerini," said he, with

some haughtiness, "is unaccustomed to sue for friendship, unless meeting with a reciprocal return."

"And have you a doubt of my acceptance?" enquired Montaldi, moved by the young man's energy. "Oh! that you could search my heart—oh! that I were not prohibited the eclaircissement due to yourself, and the honor you proffer me should not be withheld—every suspicion should be removed that renders an acquaintance with Vincent Montaldi derogatory to the honor of Ernesto Almerini. He must not; nay, shall not hold intercourse with one of dubious reputation."

"Then you reject my offer?"

"Yes," replied Montaldi, "but with what reluctance, Heaven only can tell!" and he leant his tottering frame for sup-

port against his favourite beech. "A fatal vow exists!—exists at once to deprive me of your friendship, and to constitute me the most wretched of beings! My honor is impeached by these very meetings, of which I found it impossible to deprive myself."

"Good heavens!" said Ernesto, "what strange ambiguous language do you use? What can prevent you from telling me at least who you are?"

"'Tis forbid," answered Montaldi, turning from him with visible emotion—"yet, before we part, if the voice of a stranger will gain credence—if the mere force of external appearance can obtain confidence, be assured, when you consign Montaldi to the oblivion fate compels him to seek, you will leave one whose honor is unsullied, whose birth is not disgraceful, and whose qualities

such, that were they known, would place him on an equality with Ernesto Almerini. You will by the comparison, discover I am not free from egotism," said he, lanquidly smiling. "Adieu!" he continued, vanishing as he spoke.

Finding it impossible to follow his hasty steps, Ernesto gave up the pursuit, extremely mortified, for his high-raised expectations had been most cruelly disappointed.

His mind engrossed by the strange things he had heard, and his curiosity powerfully excited, urged him to make further discoveries.—Who could the mysterious Florentine be? Some deceptious character? No; he would reject such an opinion, and believe him guiltless, though all should combine to prove him guilty. What motive could influence the strangeness of his con-

duct? He alluded to a vow!—that alone was the barrier, for he seemed inclined to gratify the sentiment he had given birth to. It was evident he was enveloped in mystery, and to solve that mystery, no difficulty he thought too formidable. He sought information from the rustic neighbours; various were the tales they repeated to him. Some speaking from mere conjecture, said he was this: and some represented him as that: but all joined in pronouncing him amiable. He next applied to the servants of Montaldi, but they possessed the best safeguard of secresy—ignorance of the secret. Old Janetta, the wife of Pietro, the gondoleer, was the best person he was told, to answer his questions: to this ancient gossip he resorted.—Oh, she could tell him all; would he be pleased to be seated? An invitation Ernesto unhesitatingly complied with, for he was under the in-

fluence of curiosity, that levelling point, that remover of obstacles.

Eager anxiety was pourtrayed on the countenance of Ernesto, and a something that portended gratification on that of Janetta.

"That Senor Vincent Montaldi is the most gentle creature, I need not tell you, for you have seen him, and will not, I am sure, be the first to give him a contrary character. Some six years ago, workmen were sent to repair the habitation the Senor Montaldi lives in, and by the rapidity of their work, all concluded money was not spared, and the intended inhabitant very rich. Well, senor, we were all busy, and eager to know who it could be, whether old or young, man or woman, was it a family or a single person? The workmen could tell us nothing; they knew not

who employed them; all they cared about was, they were well paid. Well, senor, this passed off, they had finished their business and went away. Some days after, an old man and woman, Pauliana and Astolfo, came to the casino, (for so the workmen called it, saying they were ordered to repair it as such,) we came to see the old couple, but went away empty-handed; all they chose to tell us was, that in a day or two somebody was expected, and from the secrecy, they supposed it was a lady. Well, we were all on the watch—nobody came, till one morning we were surprised to find Pauliana in a great bustle; we asked the cause of her hurry. 'Cause enough,' said she, "for one of the handsomest senors I have ever seen is at the casino; he came unknown to me and Astolfo.' "How can that be?' said I, "unknown to you!' Yes, by the Holy Virgin, he must have

come in the dead of the night, for my husband and myself did not go to bed till the midnight bell of the monastery had chimed. Stay up any longer I would not, and so I told Astolfo—so to bed we went, and in the morning found the senor, who had let himself in with a key the workmen had given him. Blessings on us, said I, why did you not call us up? 'You were asleep, and I would not disturb you,' said he, in a voice that I am sure could belong to none but a nobleman. Was it not considerate, Janetta?' I said 'It was,' and so I thought—with that she left me. Well, senor, we all threw ourselves in his way, and when he met us, how did he behave? In a manner that brought, I am sure, the tears into my eyes, to think one so young and handsome should be so solitary. The children as curious as their parents, would often steal a peep at him, and try to follow him in his

walks; and they were frequent. Sometimes when he saw their art, he would call them to him, and play just like one of them; then on a sudden, say, 'Go! go!' with so much agitation that we all pronounced him mad. 'He is, at least, a harmless madman,' said my husband, Pietro, who has borne him many a time across the river in his gondola; and to be sure he paid him like a prince, which I suppose he is, in disguise, and conceals his rank that he may see into the miseries of the poor."

"Is he so benevolent?" enquired Ernesto.

"Senor, 'tis a proof you know him not, or that question might have been spared. He has done more good than all the noblemen in Florence, (but why this distinction—for to be sure he is one himself,) and expends his vast revenue in this way I suppose."

Ernesto finding the intelligence of Janetta consisted chiefly in supposition, his patience been to feel exhausted; the character he heard of the man he felt the strongest inclination to esteem, afforded him infinite satisfaction, though at the same time, he could not give implicit credit to the relation of the gondoleer's wife. It is true she had exaggerated the benevolence of Montaldi, for the acts of imaginary charity she had imputed to him would really have required the fortune of that prince she had surmised him to be. That his heart was amiable, and his hand extended to relieve, many had had convincing proofs, but he was certainly indebted to Janetta for magnifying acts that only demanded notice from the exalted motives of the donor.

"But I have not done, senor," said she. "What puzzles us all, the Senor

Montaldi has been known to continue whole days absent from the casino, and none, though they have tried, could follow him, or tell where he went."

"'Tis mysterious," said Ernesto, pausing.

"'Tis indeed, senor; we cannot, do all we can, guess who he is. 'Twas once whispered he was a spy, or an agent of the Secret Tribunal, who you know travel here, and there, and every where, in different disguises; but he has been too long, and makes no observation, and lives so harmless, that I'm sure he could injure no one; and if any has injured him, which sometimes I think is the case, the Virgin help them; they will have to answer for sinning against a saint, for sure he is one. Had you seen him when poor Monaco the lazzaroni, who lives in a hut leading to

Pausilippo, met with an accident, you would have called him what I did, an angel. That is, however, a long time ago; but you must know, that after the second time, the senor would not see him; no, not even when the poor fellow wished to return him thanks. 'Let them live in his memory,' said he; 'they will teach him a useful lesson—that it is necessary for the preservation of mankind that humanity should be exerted." These were, senor, the very words. Nor will he even admit strangers. But I know yet more of him."

Ernesto concluding from this observation, that Janetta could tell him who Montaldi was, entreated her to answer his question.

"Our blessed Lady grant I could," replied she.

Ernesto then put an end to his visit. Chagrined that at the period his expectations were raised to the highest pitch, they should be so cruelly destroyed; however from the conclusions naturally drawn from the communication of Janetta, he made no doubt but that the Senor Montaldi was worthy of his friendship, though enveloped in mystery from some hidden cause.

Painful were the struggles he had to encounter with, in which pride and a high sense of honor powerfully operated. Might he not, by trusting to a prepossessing exterior, admit to his confidence a being whose disgrace might cast an odium on himself; nevertheless he would make another trial, and two days after called on Montaldi.

He found him as usual, calm and fixedly dejected; no obtrusive regret or

complaint betrayed the anguish of his mind. He constrained himself to appear chearful, and gave to Ernesto a most cordial reception.

"You see," said he, "I was not deterred from visiting you again, though you treated me with so much undeserved austerity."

"You wrong me," said Montaldi, "by the idea; my intention was not such."

"I am satisfied. How willingly we believe what we wish!" and he was proceeding to compliment.

"Hold!" said Montaldi; you use deception. Is it for the despised, reprobated, Vincent Montaldi to show how much he scorns the semblance, the disguise a fate the most severe compels

him to assume? For shame! to let him dispute the palm with you! Do not yield candour to such a one. No; 'tis for him whom deception inveils to practise her arts. Was it generous—was it worthy of Ernesto Almerini, to seek from hireling servants the secret of their master? Is prudence and caution, traits so blameable that you must seek another name to conceal their dictates? They urged you to enquire into the connections of the man you wished to call your friend; disappointed by his secresy, you sought information from his servants and neighbours—a promiscuous group of friends and enemies—the best explainers of hidden mysteries!"

This last sentence was accompanied with an ironical smile that stung the very soul of Ernesto.

"Leave, I beseech you, the disgraced,

abandoned Montaldi to receive the deserts due to the ignominious, for secresy is generally construed into ignominy. Believe me such; I can bear the idea, though it should injure me in your opinion."

"Never, never," said Ernesto, "I feel conviction, and own your superiority."

"Severe indeed must be your self-reproach, if you feel abased in the presence of the sunken, humiliated Montaldi."

Ernesto could not speak; overcome by emotion, and a consciousness of the disingenuous part he had acted, he found a justification impossible.

Montaldi beheld the conflict with pain, and willing to palliate the acri-

monious language he had used, assumed an air less severe; and before they parted, Ernesto wrung from him a reluctant permission to renew the visit; but he kept not his promise till accompanied by Senor Bartolo, his uncle.

The senor was pleased with the frank demeanour of Montaldi, and would have vouched, had it been required, that he was the being his open countenance represented him to be.

Laurentini listened to his conversation with pleasure, for she felt a predilection in favour of Montaldi—a predilection that a knowledge of his real character would have heightened; but the impression made by a stranger (though to be sure a very interesting one) was not indelible, and the mystery in which he was enveloped, served to destroy the momentary interest he had excited.

But when the conversation of her beloved Ernesto was fraught with panegyrics on this unknown being, she felt her dormant curiosity again aroused, and almost wished she could once more behold this miracle of perfection.

Chance however effected what premeditation could not procure; twice in one week had herself and Ernesto encountered the mysterious Florentine. His manners were irresistible, and the harmonious accent of his fine toned voice vibrated continually on her ear. She trembled for herself; she knew not who Montaldi might be. She heaved a sigh, and appeared melancholy.

Ernesto far from divining the real cause, rallied her with his usual gaiety.

The unfortunate Montaldi was likewise consumed by a passion as fatal as

it was hopeless. 'Twas in vain he strove to banish from his remembrance, the fatal charms of Laurentini—the voice of reason was disregarded by him; and when he would have sought the oblivion of forgetfulness, the mighty visions of his distempered imagination recalled the image that engrossed his every thought. To fly from Laurentini was to fly from himself; and in solitude, that nurse of passion, he found no resource to relieve his mind from dwelling continually on an object so destructive to his peace.

He nourished in his bosom the fatal wound, and the gentle flowing Arno was oft the unconscious witness of his plaint. To the pallazzo, the scene of his nightly visitation, he directed his wayward steps, indulging the fond delusive hope that his eyes would be blessed with a sight of her he loved more than life.

Disappointed, he would cross his hands on his bosom, while pitying echo lengthened his sighs. 'Twas then he mourned the barrier that stepped between Laurentini and love, deprecate his destiny, and do all that a passion so ardent could dictate. "Shall I," would he say, "thus pliant, be borne away by the tide of affliction? No, I will resist—repel force with force, and call honor to my aid. With thee for his support, Montaldi cannot be forlorn."

Thus self-deceived, he fancied himself secure, till the next meeting, like some bold invader, broke through whole ranks of human precaution, put some to confusion, and the rest to flight. 'Twas then, completely vanquished, Montaldi yielded to the darkest despair; bereft of every hope, for not even in the enthusiasm of a passion the most deceiving, did he once entertain the idea that the

senora would return the love of an unknown mysterious being. Would she unite her fate to his?—she, whom nobles would proudly contend for, and whom wealth, grandeur, and titles courted—would she resign all these for him? Impossible! improbable the idea! What then did he expect?—Her compassion—one sigh of sympathy. But yet to excite that sympathy she must be made acquainted with his sufferings. And could he be influenced by motives so selfish?—Perish the thought! Montaldi shall never disturb that repose he would willingly resign his life to preserve. In blissful serenity may the bosom of Laurentini remain unconscious of his anguish.—Wretched Montaldi! no ray of light illumines your chequered path; a victim of fate, he bows submissive to the stern decree. For thee, happy senora, the voice of gaiety has charms; obey the pleasing summons,

and forget that a being as forlorn as Montaldi, exists. Then would he whole days seclude himself in the silence of retirement, forgetful of all but love and Laurentini.

He was frequently indulged with a visit from Ernesto, who observed his despondency with the deepest concern; and oft to the attentive ear of Laurentini did he relate the discovery.

If description failed to interest her feelings, an accidental meeting with Montaldi realized what he in his most sanguine expectations had not dared to hope. It obtained for him the love of Laurentini.

The observation she had made of his dejection, she imputed to the force of a passion she was now to feel the effects of; that her state admitted of no allevia-

tion, was evident, for she possessed too much good sense, to indulge even for a moment the idea that the duca would sanction a union so inauspicious. The obtruding reflection tinctured with a soft melancholy her gayest hours, and, like the untimely blight, blasted the fair buds of pleasure.

Solitary in the midst of society, and abstracted in the most entertaining conversation, no subject possessed a charm sufficiently attractive to banish Montaldi from her memory. An admirer of worth, wherever it was to be found, she made not offerings at the shrine of greatness, and when disinterested generosity, aided by love, pleaded too powerful in her bosom, duty and rectitude marked out the path.

The irresistible grace of Montaldi, and the attractive elegance of his man-

pers, would have been considered a sufficient surety of his worth, to a less prejudiced being than Laurentini. Disposed only to think favourable of him, she rejected all that suspicion suggested. The unusual seclusion in which he lived, while it excited in her bosom an interest to know the cause, awakened a tenderness not easily repressed. She viewed him in the light of an injured being; her heart became penetrated, and she longed to soften his misfortunes; but how could she become acquainted with the nature of them? He had refused to the proffered friendship of Ernesto, the much wished-for disclosure. Concealment, like a cherished enemy, imperceptibly undermined her delicate frame, and in the utmost anguish she passed her days. The duca, her father, unacquainted with her sorrow, could only wonder within himself at the strange alteration, and earnestly besought his bro-

ther Senor Bartolo to penetrate, if possible, the cause; but the disguise with which Laurentini guarded her secret, baffled all the efforts of this tenderly attached relation.

Ernesto, who was perhaps the only one not totally ignorant of the state of her heart, redoubled his endeavours to learn more of the mysterious Florentine. In spite of himself, he could not but think him some distinguished personage, but what could be his motive for concealment? It was evident Montaldi had voluntarily refused his overtures of friendship; he spoke of a vow—should he break that, and become worthless? His forbearance was amiable, and he, Ernesto, would also practise self-denial; but may not the whole be an imposition?

This thought arrested the rapid pro-

gress of the ardent and glowing Ernesto, he remained in a state of irresolution; his pride took the alarm, but soon became subdued. When he called to recollection the impassioned energy of Montaldi, and the partial justification extorted from him. "Yes, unhappy friend! for such I feel proud to call you; I will believe you guiltless—Almerini shall not wrong you by unjust suspicions."

The generous Ernesto, tenacious of the honour of Montaldi, endeavoured by a thousand ingenious contrivances, to learn from him the secret he so well guarded. Actuated by this laudable motive, he sought to withdraw him from seclusion; but Vincent, aware of his intention, preserved the same tormenting reserve. His heart, though warm and benevolent, had received a chill, which suffered it not to expand; and to an imperfect beholder, his aspect was that

of gloomy misanthropy, rather than the effect of imposed and unwilling disguise. His mind, though ill at ease, rendered him not insensible to the beauty of the surrounding scenery. Gratified by the contemplation of Nature, in her most varied form he beheld her stupendous works with the admiration of an enthusiast; the charm of diversification heightened each rustic scene, and gave variety to the romantic landscape. The casino, though remotely situated, was not totally sequestered—the thick scattered cots of his humble neighbours added fertility to the blooming plains, and the smile of plenty bespoke them to be a happy cheerful people.

Montaldi beheld their serenity with an emotion of pleasure, but each face was that of a stranger; each tongue uttered an unfamiliar sound. He sighed for the soft insinuating accent of friend-

ship; he longed for the society of a congenial being: the very domestics that attended him could boast of an advantage denied him. Some tender relative tie bound each of them one to the other. In the fond intercourse of affection the labour of domestic toil became lessened; their pleasure increased, and their sorrow divided by communication—while he, alas! an unacknowledged being, claimed not the sympathetic glow, excited not interest, save that resulting from curiosity. Prevented by the severity of his fate from enjoying the society of Ernesto, he endured the double mortification of being considered by him an object unworthy of his esteem; and the lovely Laurentini, might he not suffer in her opinion? This reflection it was that rendered insupportable the cruel interdiction. "Oh! destiny, cruel and relentless," he would exclaim, while with impassioned energy

he struck his forehead, "the too charming senora can never be mine! She honours not the outcast Montaldi, even in thought, but she knows, not the sufferings of this bosom, nor ever shall —it would be dishonourable to steal on her affections."

Montaldi, engaged in continual struggles with himself, had the fortitude to preserve a silence highly honorable, and yet, should he reveal the sentiments she had inspired him with.—What! offer poverty and obscurity for her acceptance? No; however disinterested, she would reject with disdain, an alliance so unequal., He was well acquainted with the exalted worth of the duca, but would he lose sight of that parental solicitude which would induce him to provide more suitable for his daughter? Should he look beyond the mere adventitious circumstance of fortune? he

certainly would expect the advantage of birth, and unsullied fame. Now he, Montaldi, had no pretension to either—could hardly claim a name. Wherefore—what had he to offer in justification of his presumption? Oppressed by these considerations, he yielded his whole soul to the darkest despair, and would have resigned himself its complete victim, but for a certain softness he discovered in the aspect of Laurentini. It bid him cherish the flattering hope, that in her fair bosom he had a powerful advocate; and truly it was no deception, for the irresistible power of love had levelled all distinction, and she yielded to intrinsic merit what had been denied to those wealthy pretenders, who could claim no other advantage but that derived from fortune. Superior to pecuniary considerations, native delicacy forbade a confession tenderness would have extorted; and the untold tale escaped not

the privacy of her bosom, but gained strength by being nurtured in secret. The perfections of Montaldi were ever present to her thoughts, and while she inwardly condemned his coldness, she was the sole object that engaged his attention.

It was in vain he deplored the inseparable barrier to his happiness.—Would it ever be removed? Dreadful state of suspense—might not some more fortunate and successful lover step in, and snatch from him the beauteous Laurentini! But not long did he dwell on this subject; the bare idea almost enfrenzied him; he resolved on an immediate explanation; he would reveal his bosom's secret to the gentle senora, implore her compassion—and he paused. Instantly recollecting himself, he exclaimed, "Lie still tumultuous passions, silence shall, nay, must be maintained,

or they will with justice accuse me of temerity. It would be an insupportable affront—such a proposal Ernesto would resent, scoff at my pretensions; call them—call them—oh! heavens, false! Did he but say so, this arm should wipe off the insult—though it should wade in Ernesto's blood—the blood of my friend, the brother of my Laurentini. Distraction—madness! Reason, thou fugitive, where, where shall I seek you? Not within myself; I know thee not. Confusion alone reigns in this forlorn bosom—its anguish mocks the powers of relief."

And truly spoke the unhappy Montaldi; a stranger to peace, or even its semblance, he suffered agony unspeakable, agony that felt augmented, when he reflected how much he must suffer in the opinion of the duca and his family,

by the mystery he was still compelled to preserve. "What must they think me? Some disgraceful being! some shameful exile!—but Ernesto thinks me otherwise." This thought shed the balm of consolation to his wounded mind. He knew in the bosom of young Almerini he had awakened an interest; he had even sought his society — what a convincing proof; but his visits were performed by stealth—night generally veiled them. He would blush to be seen with Vincent Montaldi; and the vivid passions, as they rose in quick succession, proved at once his torment and reproach.

When thinking of the first momentous meeting with the senora, he was almost tempted to wish such had never taken place. His heart had been spared the pang that almost rived it. Destiny

had not appeared so rugged, nor he rebellious, spent the livelong day in useless regret.

The unconscious feet of Ernesto almost mechanically led the way to the casino. He could not deny himself the pleasure resulting from Montaldi's conversation, and oft at the silent hour of night he strolled around the boundaries of the forest, and encountered the wandering Montaldi. Together they would stray, till each forgetful of the flight of time, were surprised by grey-eyed morn; then would they part; Montaldi to renew his unceasing complaint, and Ernesto to lament the prohibition, that time seemed not to remove, for he felt every inclination to admit to his confidence a being, he, in spite of appearance, considered worthy of it.

The loud toned clock, from the

neighbouring monastery, had in mournful sounds, proclaimed the midnight hour, when Ernesto disappointed in not meeting with Montaldi, strayed toward the casino, but before he had reached it, he was amazed by a most strange and unusual appearance; the whole forest appeared illuminated.

Almost petrified with what he saw, a death-like stupor benumbed his faculties, and deprived him of all energy. Statue-like he stood, till a sudden and total darkness began to create fears for his safety. He found himself entangled in intricacies he knew not how to extricate himself from. He paused to deliberate on what plan was most prudent to pursue; to involve himself further was dangerous, and to remain where he was, equally unwise.

In this state of indecision a gleam of

light darted athwart the forest. Ernesto followed its direction; it led him on for a considerable while, and conducted him an immeasurable distance without affording any certain clue whereby he could solve the apparent mystery.

At length the light suddenly stopped, and he was presently involved in total darkness. Ernesto concluded the person who bore it, had either entered some place unseen by him, or had hid himself.

Determined to discover, if possible, whether his conjectures were right, he groped his way on, feeling as he went, with his hands; the intermingling branches of the thick clustered trees, impeded his progress, and with difficulty he could use his hands to defend his face from the rude assault of the heavy boughs.

In this uncomfortable manner he had proceeded a few paces, when his hand came in contact with something damp and moist. An involuntary emotion of fear made his whole frame tremble;—he felt the face of a man! his hair seemed clotted with blood, and his naked exposed body, lacerated with ghastly wounds.

Ernesto's limbs stiffened with horror, and refused to perform their office, and fixed him the disgusted companion of the murdered man. That the unhappy stranger had been attacked by banditti he made no doubt; and apprehensive of sharing the same fate, should he continue where he was, he summoned all his fortitude, and left the dreadful spot.

Bewildered in the wilds of the forest, he hardly knew which way to direct his

steps. Again the same illusion appeared, by the aid of which he walked with facility, and keeping pace with the light, caught a glimpse of the holder. —— 'Twas a being of gigantic stature! a skeleton in form, with two flaming red eyes rolling fiercely in their sockets. Across one shrivelled shoulder hung a flowing mantle, whose corners seemed dipped in human gore, and apparently distilling the same at each step the horrid phantom took. One fleshless hand grasped a bunch of rusty keys, while the other with almost supernatural strength brandished a ponderous sword, the weight of which would have crushed an ordinary sized being.

With hasty strides the monstrous spectre moved; it advanced toward Ernesto. He closed his eyes, and beheld no more. A death-like insensibility

suspended every faculty, and froze the blood in his veins.

For some time he remained in this morbid state, when coming to himself, the sound of several voices, seemingly near him, attracted his attention; he listened to their conversation; they were discoursing about the spectre.

"'Tis the one," thought Ernesto, "that has so terrified me."

Accordingly he made up to the men; three in number, assuring them he had also seen the same mysterious figure.

They looked at each other, as if happy at obtaining a confirmation of what some might have thought their own conceit.

"It is not the first time," said one of

the men, "that I have passed the forest, and never met with the least disturbance. Paulo and Gustavus," pointing to the other two, "have been with me many a time, and saw nothing to frighten us. Now I think, though I cannot persuade them that the ghost took the way to the casino, and if I might speak out, senor, was that very Montaldi himself."

Ernesto shuddered, at which Guelpho, the person who addressed him, could not forbear smiling.

"'Tis no laughable matter, however, comrade," said Gustavus, rebuking him for his levity; "for though I do not think it was the Senor Montaldi, I fear it was some one equally as terrible."

"Equally as terrible!" thought Ernesto; "what could the man mean?

Perhaps he had some reason for speaking thus of Montaldi."

His fears in part subsided, and well pleased to find companions in a place so dismal, Ernesto, like the rest, began to make light of the affair. But one trouble had no sooner been overcome than it was to be succeeded by another. As they were pursuing their route in the utmost harmony, the most fearful storm that had ever been witnessed, arose; the contending elements seemed at war with each other; shrill whistled the wind, hoarse rolled the thunder, vivid were the flashes of lightning, and heavy descended the big drops of rain, accompanied by large pelting hail-stones, which attacked with violence the faces of the travellers. The men, however, more fortunate than Ernesto, were provided with roquelaires, while he, ex-

posed to the fury of the tempest, was completely drenched.

Reproaching himself for the temerity that had plunged him into this dilemma, he fell into a train of thinking, out of which he was aroused by loud hideous yells of laughter. A blue sulphurous flame blazed before his straining eyes—his hair erect with terror, was grasped by an icy hand—in vain he endeavoured to elude its grasp—three chill fingers pressed with force his bosom—he breathed with difficulty: when the vision in a hollow sepulchral voice, said—

"What is it you fear?"

Ernesto could not speak; his chained tongue refused to articulate a sound, and clung inactive to his palate. His dreadful visitant, with a demoniac yell,

turned from him and disappeared, at the same time as a most appalling and supernatural noise seemed to shake the earth to its foundation. Ernesto's knees smote each other, and cold damps bedewed his forehead.

Relieved from the presence of his terrific visitor, he ventured to enquire whether his companions had been likewise alarmed? but how great was his surprise—how dreadful his apprehensions to find them gone, and the ground in many places besmeared with blood!—He shuddered as he surveyed the sanguinary marks—his heart bled for the fate of the poor peasants, whose lives, he feared, had been sacrificed to the fury of some ruthless villains—but why he should escape their vengeance, was a matter of the utmost astonishment to him. Perhaps they were the victims of supernatural agency. What but a

ghostly appearance was the one he had just witnessed ?

The storm had now abated, and the bright rays of the moon darting through the impervious shade of the forest, served to shew Ernesto his way. Greatly agitated, he was a considerable time in retracing the path he had missed. Pale and trembling he reached the pallazzo, when throwing himself on his bed, he recalled to his memory each event as they had rose in succession.

Cool and collected, he sought to give a meaning to all that he had beheld: his meeting with the peasants—the ambiguous words of Guelpho—what could they allude to ? Perplexed and lost in conjecture, he longed to impart to the duca the discovery he had made.

When assembled at breakfast, with

no small portion of embellishment, he recounted the whole. The relation being as new as it was strange, obtained not perfect credit. The duca had never heard before of such mysterious doings, and much to the displeasure of Ernesto, imputed the whole narrative to the effects of a heated imagination. Even Laurentini could not forbear laughing, and rallied him with the utmost gaiety.

Not to be ridiculed or persuaded out of what his senses had witnessed, Ernesto resolved on the following night, accompanied by a chosen few of the vassals, to develope, if possible, the mystery that had so powerfully interested him;—he kept his intention secret, lest his design should meet with opposition, and awaited impatiently the period of investigation.

## CHAP. II.

At length the appointed hour arrived. High expectation agitated the bosom of Ernesto. Possessed of great courage, he longed ardently for an opportunity of displaying it, and animated with the idea of detecting fraud, should such exist, he immediately summoned the vassals, who, with more fear than obedience, prepared to follow him.

He boldly led the way to the forest, but before he had proceeded a hundred yards, on turning round to encourage his attendants, he observed them, one and all, on the point of retreating. With dismay they had heard his determination of taking with him so few

—for, like true cowards, they alone derived courage from their number.

Ernesto, struck with a secret awe, and a something like dread, inspired by the solemnity of the hour, felt averse to be left alone. He was at a loss how to proceed, it was hazardous to remain where he was, and equally as unsafe to venture on. Indignant at their conduct, he sternly commanded them to proceed: they did so—but with every emotion of fear; with chattering teeth —knees smiting each other, and clasped hands. Panic-struck, their feet refused their office, and brought their shaking bodies to their mother earth. Exasperated at their cowardice, he rebuked them with severity, and more particularly his favourite, Orsino, whom no encouragement could stimulate to return: not possessing more valor than he did faith, for though he so devoutly in-

voked the protection of the Virgin, he would not wholly trust himself to her disposal. His fellows laughed at his hasty flight, though they in the same predicament staid not for precedence, and left the enraged Ernesto to shift for himself.

Undismayed, and not easily intimidated, Ernesto walked fearlessly on, and for some time without interruption, when the before-mentioned light appeared. The most soul-harrowing shrieks assailed his ears, distant rolling, as if of thunder, seemed to rend the air, and portended some uncommon event. The courage of Ernesto nearly forsook him. An unseen hand dragged him precipitately along—then hurled him away with so much violence, that nearly deprived him of sense or motion. With difficulty he regained his legs. Several men habited in fantastic dresses, met

his anxious gaze—he followed them at some distance—they led him through the labyrinths of the forest, then disappeared of a sudden.

"Is this chimera?" exclaimed Ernesto, stupified with what he beheld—almost repenting of his rashness.

He determined, nevertheless, not to give up the pursuit till completely satisfied. Unmindful of danger, the only concern he felt was for the duca and Laurentini, lest they, when acquainted with the enterprise, should feel solicitude on his account: the domestics, he made no doubt, influenced by fear, would alarm the family, in order to provide for his safety; and thus, if not prompt in the research, he might meet with interruption.

While thus deliberating, several men

bearing lighted torches, approached, and fiercely bid Ernesto submit. Immediately he put himself in a defensive attitude, a general laugh of derision was set up, and the men prepared to disarm him, which Almerini resolutely opposed. But, great God! what were his sensations—what the anguish of his mind, on discovering among the foremost of the men, the Mysterious Florentine, Vincent Montaldi! An ejaculation of surprise escaped his lips.

"Senor Almerini!" said Montaldi, in a tremulous accent—then paused, unable to proceed.

Deep anguish seemed to rend his bosom, which heaved convulsively; his dark penetrating eyes were cast on the ground, as if lost in profound thought.

Ernesto contemplated his interesting figure with considerable emotion, and extended his hand, which Montaldi would have pressed, but was prevented by two of the ruffians, who rudely repulsed him. A motley and horrid noise rendered indistinct what he would have said, and with a hideous yell of triumph they bore him off, leaving Ernesto aghast with astonishment: in vain he attempted to keep pace with them, they were presently lost to his view, and every trace of them gone.

Unable to solve the mysteries that presented themselves, Ernesto fell into a deep reverie. "Where could Montaldi be going?—Why did he associate with beings so dissimilar?—'Twas evident his departure was compulsory, by the look he gave so fraught with meaning." Thousands would he have given to have known

more of that mysterious character; and to penetrate his concealment he would have thought no difficulty too great.

But before he could reduce his undigested thoughts to any thing like connection, a troop of men advancing toward him, attracted his attention, and instantly he recognised the duca's vassals, and himself at their head.

At the sight of his father, shame and confusion overspread the countenance of Ernesto; he had by his rashness awakened parental concern, and even filled with anxiety the bosoms of those whose honest zeal had induced them to publish his design, in order to snatch him from the danger their fears apprehended.

Immediately on the intelligence, the

venerable duca assembled his domestics, and with them went in pursuit of Ernesto, whom they found pale, trembling, and much disordered.

"My son!" exclaimed the duca, "what means the distraction of your looks—has aught appeared to alarm you? Speak, and spare the feelings of a father."

Ernesto, in an imperfect manner, related what had happened, but when he described his meeting with Montaldi, the duca could maintain silence no longer.

"Do not suffer yourself to be deceived by an illusion," said he, "for scarce a moment has elapsed since these eyes beheld Montaldi walking in his usual calm placid manner, and as we passed I accosted him."

The domestics confirmed this assertion to the utter surprise of Ernesto, who perplexed, but not convinced, walked in silence to the pallazzo, where with breathless expectation, the lovely Laurentini awaited their arrival.

Casting her arms fondly round the neck of Ernesto, she tenderly reproached him for the alarm he had created, to which he pleaded guilty, but obtained forgiveness by promising to offend no more.

Ernesto, who could hardly credit the evidence of his senses, felt still averse to adopt the opinion of his father, but he observed his obstinacy pained him, and he dropped the subject.

The description he gave of Montaldi, awakened the sensibility of Laurentini,

and revived a passion that not all the seeming contrarieties of his conduct could banish. She pitied his misfortunes, sympathized with his distress, and inveighed against the perfidy of those who had doomed him to a life of privation.

Ernesto, who passed a sleepless night, arose at an early hour, and walked to the casino; but what a sight presented itself to his view! Ruin and devastation marked a scene so late that of harmony and peace. Montaldi had disappeared, and with him Astolfo and Pauliana.

This was indeed a mystery inexplicable, and Ernesto once more sought to gratify an inquisitive spirit, but could gain no intelligence of the fugitives; the peasants recounted a marvellous tale of wonderful sights, and uncommon noises.

Wearied with fruitless enquiries, Ernesto returned home; his visible anxiety escaped not the observation of Laurentini, and she obtained from him a full confession.

His recital affected her inasmuch as the departure of Montaldi frustrated her high-raised hopes, and she now felt he was most essential to her happiness. She believed him to be persecuted, and freely would have softened his distress, had the means been in her power; but, alas! it was not, and this consideration filled her fair bosom with unutterable anguish, for never would she, even for a moment, consider him in any other light than that of the most injured of human creatures.

The neglect of Montaldi wounded sensibly the generous Ernesto; warm and enthusiastic in friendship, his mor-

tification at the indifference he had been treated with, was extreme. "This proud unknown," said he, mentally, "has scorned my offers, rejected them, and treated me with contempt. Why were his manners so insinuating?—Why his accent so specious? Is it that I may regret his absence the more? But I will forget this inflexible being, banish him for ever from my memory, and mention his name no more."

The duca, indignant at the affront offered his pride, strengthened him in this resolution, and consigned the unfortunate Montaldi to oblivion; but in the gentle Laurentini he found a warm and zealous advocate; she sought to excuse to herself his seeming inattention. Unforeseen events might have been the cause, yet her heart could hardly acquit him; one hasty farewell—one look of regret might have softened the pang of

separation, but Vincent loved not, and consequently had no sacrifice to make. Thus unceasingly would she torment herself, first condemning, then excusing, and finally reconciling the conduct of Montaldi, till it appeared to her infatuated view blameless. She wished not the charm dispelled; she cherished the dear delusion, which proved at once her pleasure and her pain.

One eve as Ernesto was straying along the banks of the Arno, indulging the privacy of thought, the moon beams, as their rays darted on the waters, presented to his view, the reflected shadow of a man.

He started—a momentary trepidation seized him. Collecting all his courage, he awaited with firmness the result.

The figure beckoned to him.

He obeyed the signal, and in silence followed his conductor.

His air was stately and commanding, his stature middling, and his dress, which was calculated to conceal his person, costly. Turning suddenly round, and purposely averting his face, he exclaimed, with solemnity, "Beware of Montaldi; beneath his smile lurks danger."

"Explain yourself, mysterious being," said Almerini, with earnestness.

"'Tis forbid," replied the figure, vanishing as he spoke.

Ernesto attempted to detain him, but he eludedh is grasp, and glided swiftly on.

The insinuating and persuasive accent of the stranger made a deep impression

on Ernesto; there was something strikingly interesting in his manner. And yet might not the words have been uttered merely to prejudice him against Montaldi! But he had proudly rejected all favours—would owe him no obligation; therefore a motive so invidious could not have influenced the utterer—'twas the warning of a friend, and he would accept it as such. Immediately his heart relented, for to think ill of Montaldi did violence to his feelings; the whole might be an ingenious contrivance of his to learn his real sentiments. "At least," said he, mentally, "I will wait till further testimony pronounces him guilty, and not condemn for the accusation of a secret, and perhaps interested enemy."

After a long and tedious watch to no purpose, Ernesto bent his steps home-

wards, recounting to the attentive Laurentini, the night's adventure.

She, as well as himself, was lost in conjecture; even the duca owned the affair was mysterious, and no longer treated with levity the relation of Ernesto, but unlike him, harboured suspicions very injurious to the honor of Montaldi; he believed him to be a designing character, whose deep-laid schemes and secret machinations would be easily discovered in the sequel.

"Recollect you not," said Ernesto, with warmth, "the accident that introduced him to our acquaintance? 'Twas not self-sought, chance made us his debtors, but generously refusing the advantage circumstance gave him, he scorned all recompense, and almost forbid a renewal of the meeting. Was this like design?"

The duca, unable to reply, felt the justness of his remark, and inwardly subscribed to it.

In the meanwhile the unhappy object of their speculations, a prey to unavailing regret, passed in silent sadness, his mournful days; no resource could he find from tormenting and obtrusive thought. Deprived of the society of Ernesto, he felt he was a recluse indeed; to hear him talk of Laurentini, afforded him a satisfaction to be derived from no other source. He could, without betraying his passion, make those enquiries that ever communicated tranquillity to his bosom; and this dangerous indulgence fed his hopeless flame. To obtain a sight of Laurentini, employed those hours otherwise dedicated to repose, and if successful, joy animated his expressive countenance; but when he experienced the too frequent sad reverse, with gloomy

despondency would the melancholy wanderer return.

It was after one of these fruitless attempts that Montaldi, unable to support his disappointment, quitted his unsocial abode to indulge retrospection. The night was uncommonly inviting, and beguiled the rambler on; muttering his wayward fancies as he strolled, guided by the chaotic state of his mind. Painful ideas crowded on his imagination, and rendered him forgetful of even time itself.

Not totally invulnerable to fatigue, he leant in a musing position, against a tree whose stupendous height seemed towering to reach the heavens. His eyes were cast on the ground, his hand spread, and his body bent in a dejected attitude; his heart beat violently, now throbbing with convulsive sighs, now

agitated by a conflict of contending passions.

He was aroused from this melancholy stupor by a rude attack from four armed bravoes, who, in a menacing voice, demanded his money.

"Is it gold you want?" returned Montaldi, in the accent of despair. "Take it, but grant me, I beseech you, one favour—strike your stiletto here;" and he bared his bosom, as if courting death.

They made no reply.

By the light of a lantern they had placed behind the thick foliage, which they now elevated to discover what kind of a being it was who thus addressed them, Montaldi at leisure surveyed the fierce visages of the bravoes; never



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ferocity and malignancy more legibly pourtrayed than in their countenances. His dauntless soul, that feared no danger, remained unawed.

Finding the booty considerable, (consisting of many valuable articles,) they concluded he was some person of rank. This made them loth to take a life he seemed so willing to resign, and they would have left him, but one more callous than the rest, fearing their curiosity had discovered them more than they wished, resolved on securing the person of Montaldi. He resisted for awhile the meditated attack, when the bravo plunged a poniard in his bosom, and thinking him dead, to elude pursuit, placed him on a horse, which he led through the intricacies of the forest.

They arrived at a place resembling a battery; the ivy and weeds rendered it throughout inaccessible. On sounding a

suspended bugle, the gates were immediately opened by a tall meagre old woman whom they called Bianca.

The banditti were seated at supper; the sound of revelry re-echoed through the shattered walls, and filled the air with discordant mirth.

A shout of triumph announced their arrival, and an exhibition of the booty obtained their welcome.

"We have also brought," said one of the banditti, "an inhabitant for the dormitory," pointing to the insensible Montaldi.

"His looks are noble, and I dare venture he's of no mean rank," said one of the ruffians.

This directed the attention of the Senor Orsino (the appellation given to

their captain) to the spot where Montaldi lay.

On a close examination, to their utter confusion, they found the spark of life was not quite extinct. In fact, Montaldi had only fainted; and the agitation of his body from the jolting of the horse, caused a revulsion of blood.

"Here's a mistake indeed, capitano," said Filippo.

"And perhaps a fortunate one," returned Orsino. "Let the stranger be attended to; deliver him into the care of Bianca—she is skilful."

## CHAP. III.

BIANCA washed the wound of Montaldi, and after placing a bandage, with an ointment used by them on such occasions, they forced a few drops of wine down his throat, which so far revived him, that in a few hours he enquired where he was. He seemed as if awakened from a trance, for a blest insensibility had deprived him of the knowledge of what a miserable fate destiny had assigned him.

"You are among friends," replied Orsino, in answer to his question.

Montaldi looked amazed. "Who are you?" said he, with a scrutinizing glance.

The glow of consciousness suffused the cheek of Orsino, and he replied not—a sigh the most profound escaped from his bosom, perhaps awakened by recollection. He examined minutely the countenance of Montaldi, who in vain attempted to draw him into conversation. With a forced smile, he assured him he was safe, but on being further interrogated, relapsed into a state of abstraction.

His air was that of unstudied elegance, and his manners those of the accomplished gentleman; his person was graceful and commanding, yet rather conciliated, than demanded respect; and the varied expression of his countenance left you at a loss to discover the traits of his character.

Montaldi was conducted into a small inlet which served him for a bed-chamber, though not a very commodious one. The pain of his wound, and his hard bed, rendered sleep impossible; but he in some measure found his pain lulled into a kind of stupor much resembling it.

In the morning Orsino enquired with courtesy, how he had rested, and expressed sorrow on being informed very bad.

The aspect of Orsino was naturally stern, but when he had an object in view, or a point to gain, no pen or tongue can describe the accompanying look he gave, that look which never failed of success. It was with such a one he favoured Montaldi. His aim was to engage attention, and excite interest; he could then, as he thought,

mould Montaldi to his purpose, and by the gloss he would give to his dissolute manner of living, render it not so disgusting to an unvitiated mind. Agreeable to this idea, he by imperceptible degrees, glanced at those events which rendered his life interesting, and which he thought a sufficient excuse for the excesses he had indulged in.

The wound of Montaldi was bathed with a composition prepared by Bianca, and wore the most flattering appearance. The ruinous aspect of the place, and the surrounding objects, left him at no loss to guess where he was. "And I have fell into the power of robbers!" said he, mentally. "In this miserable cavern I shall end my wretched existence, far removed from what?—Not from friends; I have none."

Here imagination brought the lovely

Laurentini to his recollection, and a sigh of anguish heaved his bosom.

His agony claimed the sympathy of Orsino, and he could not forbear expressing his concern in terms somewhat warmer than could have been expected from one of his description.

"Your opinion of me," said he, with meaning, "circumstance I fear has rendered unfavourable. Judge not with severity. But lest I should prejudice you, I will relate the incidents of my life, and you shall then decide."

Montaldi bowed acquiescence, and Orsino began as follows:—

"My father, Don Rinaldo De Isidora, inherited from his illustrious ancestors, many honorary titles, with an immense fortune. At the age of twenty-five, he

made a tour to Germany, and during his stay there, paid his addresses to the only daughter of the Count Reighburgh, and at the end of a year, espoused her.

"I was their only child. Two years after my birth, my mother died.—The grief of the count for a daughter he tenderly loved, became so poignant that it put a period to his existence. He bequeathed his vast property to my father, who indulged the most heartfelt sorrow at the heavy loss he had sustained; I was the only tie that attached him to the world—but for me he would with joy have rejoined the pure spirit of his adored wife in the regions of bliss.

"The envy his late acquirement of fortune created in the narrow mind of Walsteid, (a nephew of the count's, by him disinherited for his vicious character,) was attended with serious evil.

Walsteid, his wife, and two sons, whose propensities were as wicked as his own, considered my father as an interloper of that fortune they would not, had he never existed, been benefited by.

"No intimacy for years subsisting between them and their uncle, their unprovoked malice exposed my father to many difficulties. He endeavoured in vain to frustrate their machinations, but the malevolent attempt proved too successful; he fell an unoffending prey to their craft and avarice, continually harrassed by that restless spirit of enmity which pursued him with unceasing persecution.

"Years had now elapsed, when a plan was suggested that at once involved him in destruction, and at the same time ridded him of a life calamity had rendered a burthen.—In despair he quitted

Germany, but could not elude the vigilance of his enemies, who soon discovered his retreat, and formed new plans of revenge; fully bent on his ruin, they resolved he should not escape their vengeance.

"His anxiety for me greatly depressed his spirits, and rendered him incapable of exerting the energy he so eminently possessed, and which shone conspicuous in all his actions. Misfortune he bore with a fortitude that surprised and confounded his oppressors—till the hour of his death, he lived in firm reliance on the goodness of the Supreme, and while life quivered on his lips, prayed him to pardon those who had so maliciously occasioned his untimely death.

"Would to Heaven I had followed the advice he exhorted me to pursue, my days had not been spent in remorse and anguish.

"But to resume the detail:—Finding he had rendered abortive all their projects, they accused him of heresy.—Curse on the wretch who suggested the hellish scheme. He was brought before the Inquisition, and by the testimony of suborned wretches, found guilty of heretical proceedings. By the accusation of an unknown enemy, my unhappy parent was innocently doomed to the torture.

"One day, being employed in the pleasing task of retracing the features of his sainted wife, of which I was the living resemblance, he was startled by the entrance of his servant, who informed him a person below wished to confer with him.

"Anhalt since told me my father appeared in great confusion, as if panic struck. 'And must I see him alone?'

exclaimed he, with emotion. 'Where is my son?'

"I was at that time unluckily absent, and must not omit telling you a mutual passion subsisted between me and the lovely Albina Pedro. Thither, at an early hour, unable to support a longer separation, I had repaired.

"On my return, how shall I describe my consternation on finding the hotel in great confusion! A dreadful foreboding took possession of my soul. I flew to the room I had left my father in, the door of which was open; I darted an enquiring look around, but my eyes were not blest with a sight of the object of their search.

"I was accosted by the considerate host. 'Alas! signor,' said he, 'I sincerely pity you.'

" 'If you pity me,' I replied, 'for the love of Heaven, tell me why I see not my father.'

" The good old man wiping with the back of his hand a tear, said he was just returning from my father, who had ordered some refreshment, when the entrance was filled by the officers of the Holy Hermandad. The Alcaide produced his warrant of apprehension to arrest my unhappy parent.

" He immediately led the way to the room, followed by the officers, who seemed moved with compassion on beholding him on his knees, bathing with tears a cross he held in one hand, whilst the other clasped a miniature.

" He rose and bowed, but when acquainted with the purport of their visit, all resolution forsook him.

" 'I shall not resist,' said he. 'I appeal to that God, at whose throne I was offering up my humble prayers for the escape it seems by concurring circumstances was formed for my ruin; to Him, who knows my innocence, with firm reliance I trust my life. If I am condemned to die, I am a victim sacrificed to avarice.—Might I but see my son, to take one parting embrace—one last farewell? Oh! if pity is not unknown to you, let me for the last time see him—hang on him with delight—cherish to the hour of my death, the soft accent of his tongue.'

" On being told it was impossible to grant his request, that they must not delay, he heaved a sigh; then with firmness, said, 'I attend you, sirs. To God I resign myself, and scorn to implore where pity does not exist, or at least, has been extinct, since you, holy

sirs, have entered into your sacred function."

"These last two words were delivered with a smile of such cutting irony, that provoked their ire, 'and the poor don,' said he, 'was almost dragged down stairs. But all their opposition could not deter me from kissing his hand. Oh what a look he gave me! and I could see the poor sufferer no more.' My grief at the recital of the generous host beggared all description. I would receive no consolation, and insisted on seeing my father.

"The good man represented to me the danger of my interference, which could be productive of no good to my father, but might be attended with serious consequence to me. He remonstrated against a resolution so irrational; for whoever is unfortunate enough to be-

come an inhabitant of that holy institution, are permitted to see no one; no, not even their accuser.

"What a deplorable state was I reduced to; it almost deprived me of reason—how did I reproach myself for being so premature in my visit, and leaving my sacrificed parent.

"'Ah,' thought I, and absurd enough too, 'had I been present, no power on earth should have torn him from me.'

"The only solace that alleviated my sorrow, was the presence of my Albina. She lamented my misfortune, and consoled me in the tenderest manner, promising no change of fortune should alter her sentiments. I dwelt on the soothing words with inexpressible rapture, and left her to attend the person

with whom my father's property, at least such as was conveyable, was deposited.

" Don Pedro, the father of Albina, conveyed to his own residence, our plate and jewels, to rescue them, as he said, from the ruthless hand of legal rapacity. For my own part I was too wretched to take any heed about worldly concerns. Grief had taken possession of my whole frame, and to that alone I dedicated my sad hours, for I now painfully found every door of admittance barred against me. Even the debtors of my father scarcely would see me, and deemed it an act of sacrilege to discharge a debt owing to the son of a condemned heretic. I had no claim on them; from these unhappy circumstances, and honor was out of the question. Besides, were I inclined for litigation, where the means? His es-

tates, according to form, would be confiscated. A reverend father, whom we had long known, and who owed his all to my father, to whom he was considerably indebted, when applied to by me, to refund as small a part as would be convenient, of a debt so generously lent, had the effrontery to deny it. The ghostly debtor was actually petrified, and I should have been tempted to persuade myself the demand had deprived him of intellects, had he not in quite reasonable accents, flatly contradicted my assertion. He was perfectly shocked at the claim, and could not recollect any favour conferred by Don de Isidora: he could only be astonished at the unjust demand. Then assuming a sceptical air, (probably from the knowledge of his security) haughtily demanded a sight of the instrument. Alas! where was it? — amongst the papers — and where those papers? They were in the

possession of the Holy Inquisition, and for aught I knew, perused by that august tribunal.

" The spiritual father, on receiving no answer, had resort to his suspended cross, to ease his mind, perturbed at the falseness of a claim he knew to be too just, and I left him, no doubt, weeping at the depravity of mankind, who could not leave to the unmolested pursuit of religion, but must persecute with false accusations, one who had retired from a world, which, if not voluntarily quitted, the arbitrary laws of justice would have forced to quit, in a manner where the hours of repentance would have been denied him.

" No monk inflicted on himself more penance than Anselmo, or was more prominent for rigid discipline, nor amongst any order, a member more

severe against the erring; and no member in secret, or when opportunity offered, and he was sure of escaping detection, had a greater relish for the good things of this life. But enough of him—let us leave him to the torment of his worst enemy, and that I can with safety assert, is conscience.

## CHAP. IV.

"THE servants before my face pillaged the only valuables I had left, and which fate had sternly decided should be my last resource. To their barefaced injustice I tamely submitted.

"Amongst those abject pilferers, was one, who poorest in situation, was richest in virtue. He had the boldness to reprobate the barbarity of their conduct, and took upon himself to discharge them, a task misfortune had rendered me incapable of. The faithful fellow then made known to me his

determination of continuing in my service. These hands,' said he, 'have hitherto wrought for my own support; you shall not find them inactive; at least I will not be an incumbrance on you. Then tendering me his all, which amounted to a sum far from contemptible, in respectful silence awaited my reply. You may conclude I did not reject his proffered service, but refused the money till drove to its acceptance from dire necessity.

"With anguish unspeakable I heard the melancholy news of my father's condemnation, and subsequent death. The measure of my woe seemed full; nothing remained for me but absolute despair.

"My unabated sorrow found relief in the soothing of my Albina; she my sufferings, and gave to my

thoughts a new turn, the pleasantest of which, resulting from an ingenuous confession, that I still possessed her heart. This was a great source of comfort to me, in my deplorable condition. She even went so far as to name the nuptial day; a day though distant, I reflected on with pleasure. But Orsino, the son of a heretic father, who had suffered death, and the consequent imputation of confirmed guilt, possessed of jewels, plate, and fortune, which it appeared I should not be deprived of. To Orsino, the portionless son of the above described father, whom nobody pitied, and every body shunned, because injured, differed widely, though one and the same person.

" The angelic face of my fair mistress became clouded. This unaccountable and sudden change escaped my penetra-

tion, or at least I made it appear so, not willing to notice trifles. But a far greater evil impended over my ill-fated head. I no sooner learnt that the estates of my father were confiscated, than overcome with emotion, I flew to Albina to lose in her endearing society the remembrance of the past.

"Thanks be to Heaven! I can now smile at a reception which filled me with despair. How unlike the soft soothing of love—I heard not the voice of a disinterested friend. She was coldly reserved, nay, downright haughty. Soured by frequent disappointment, I was perhaps overbearing, and wished to elucidate the mystery—it was done sooner than I wished.

"Fame, that meddlesome tell-tale, had revealed to my fair one, what had

filled me with so much anguish, nor had it less weight with her. This I found was the cause of her coldness.

" At one of those meetings, which she now took care should not be very frequent, though perhaps my own fault, for coming when she was out (but, by the bye at home); the day near approaching for the celebration of our nuptials being mentioned by accident, giving to her beautiful face a most doleful look, she said, ' she had never in the least doubted the sincerity of my attachment.' Well, thought I, this is certainly a favourable omen—my prognostic is ill founded. Being assured by me, of the continuance of my affection, she coldly replied, ' it was from that conviction she hoped for a release from an engagement she could not fulfil, after the recent calamity that had befallen me.' And indeed she was well per-

suaded, from my generosity, I should not insist on its performance; and that it would evince but little tenderness, did I wish to plunge the woman I professed to love, in poverty and misery. Then assuming a look descriptive of the tenderest compassion, added, if my passion was as sincere as I boasted, it would not suffer me to stigmatise her fair fame, by an alliance with one to whom the crimes of a father had attached such disgrace. It would cast an odium on her; and after what had happened ought not to be thought of—that the rigid laws of honour demanded such a sacrifice, however painful, for the dear considerate, would not wrong me so much, as to doubt the reality of my flame.

"I stood like a stoic, immovable—not a word of complaint escaped me, and I suffered her to order a servant to

bring the jewels her father had rescued for me. I was too much astonished to utter a syllable; the crimes of my father rankled like a thorn in my bosom, and those words issuing from the mouth of her in whom all my anticipated joys were centered.

" I had just summoned fortitude sufficient to say, ' it is well, signora,' when the servant entered, laden with the jewels, and presently after Don Pedro. He coolly bowed to me, saying—

" ' Here is what my friendship preserved for you. All I ask in return is, that you will think no more of my daughter, for a union between you and her can never take place.'

" ' You bid me,' I replied, ' perform what is not in my power,' my colour heightening at the indignity offered me.

'You tell me to think no more of your daughter, that of itself were an impossibility; but at the same time let me tell Don Pedro, my thoughts will widely differ from those with which I once honoured your daughter.' Observing he smiled. 'Yes,' I resumed, 'I say honoured! and the crimes of my father still suffer me to say so,' and I believe my looks expressed all the contempt I felt. 'For the kind office you have performed, I see I need not reward you; doubtful of my gratitude, you have already recompensed yourself, by the detention of several articles,' which I mentioned, and I darted at him a fiery look.

"Albina cast up her lovely eyes, as if shocked at the enormity of the accusation, while the don muttered.

"'Countenance a knave, and you will

be implicated in his atrocities. This is the effects of a good action.'

" I felt the full force of his insidious meaning, and so great was my rage, that nothing but his age protected him from my vengeance.

" Filial affection operating on Albina, she quitted the room, probably rather than see her father insulted.

" The don renewed his insolence, and I my charge, which he as firmly denied, and concluded by forbidding me his presence. High words ensued, and unluckily Albina, in the midst of the altercation made her re-appearance.

" Turning to her, the don said, ' give him his jewels.'

" Not noticing the air of derision that

accompanied the words, she enquired 'What jewels?'

" 'Those he says I have kept.'

" The confusion of guilt deprived her of her usual sagacity, for what had been spoken ironically she construed literally, and really thought the don bid her resign what it was his wish to withhold: accordingly she left us, quickly returning with the jewels.

" At the sight of them the don turned pale; rage, shame and guilt alternately agitated him; his injustice was discovered.

" 'What have you done?' said he, casting at Albina a look that fully explained the mistake she had made.

"I enjoyed their confusion, and loaded

them with reproaches, the justness of which absolutely struck the don dumb.

"Albina, possessed of more self-command, attempted to convince me I was mistaken. Darting a most angry glance, she said, 'To clear ourselves, I must even expose my weakness; know then, signor,' addressing me, 'these trifles were indeed once your property, but now are justly ours; not obtained by the means of fraud—' She paused, confounded at the incredulous look I gave, but recovering her scattered thoughts, she continued. 'When my father imposed on me the severe task of refusing your visits, he also insisted on my returning your miniature, and the other presents, which I blush to own I wished to keep; I was compelled, however, to yield compliance. One day, buying some baubles of a merchant, these articles I beheld, and wished to become

a purchaser of them at ever so dear a rate. The merchant, taking an advantage of the eagerness I betrayed, considerably over valued them; however, I prevailed on my father to permit me to have them—he paid the exorbitant price I had agreed to give—this favour, he said he would not refuse me, provided I returned you the trinkets. These, said he, you can keep without his knowledge, and not lessen the dignity you ought to support.'

"She adduced proofs so strong that might have convinced a perfect sceptic. She went so far as to be on the point of naming the merchant, but could not recollect his name (here unfortunately, memory failed her). I left her for her memory to strengthen, and returned to the hotel.

"No sooner there than the jewels were

sent me, but not those which were the subject of our dispute: 'twas unreasonable though to expect what the don had so dearly bought!—dearly bought indeed!

"What a revolution had so short a period made in me! I was left without parents, friends, or even common acquaintance, destitute of fortune, fame, and all that could give to life a charm: in this awful state, recollection did not fail me, and with joy I remembered a banker, once poor, but now basking in the smiles of fortune's sun; thither I repaired with all the hopes of high-raised expectation. I was ushered into his presence with due ceremony. Every surrounding object wore the aspect of pomp and splendor.

"I was overjoyed to find he recognised me—this was indeed a moment

of ecstacy! he cordailly saluted and condoled with me on my recent loss. And has Heaven in mercy, thought I, spared me such a friend! I listened to him with rapture—softer, aye, more sweet than honied accent, seemed his voice, when I heard him avow his intention to serve me. 'But the world—' 'The world indeed!' said I. 'I am glad,' he returned, 'to find you are of my opinion. Mankind are very meddlesome as well as censorious; some would not scruple to make free with my character if I countenanced, or were seen speaking to you, (who, to be sure, cannot help the errors of your father,) and its being a religious matter too, renders it more awkward. Prejudice, you know, is very strong, and few there are but what are more or less influenced by it. I will not probe by a repetition, a wound not yet healed. I have a family, the eldest of whom, my son, the merchant, is conspicuous for

piety; his celebrity for the selection of well-chosen friends, has been spread abroad, and should he see me conversing with the son of a heretic, it would appear to him a crime unpardonable; not, by the bye, that I think it so. While I am in the world, I wish to do as the world does; I seek not to please by totally bartering every sentiment, nor do I wish to displease by turning reformer.'

"What pangs the unfortunate are compelled to endure! To hear praise uttered from the lips of a parental parasite, who had openly complained of his son's reprobacy! what a trial! And had I, fired with honest indignation, retorted, though truth with her thousand tongues had established my assertion, the single voice of power would have falsified the whole.—What wonder then, that vice becomes hereditary, for man-

kind are more prone to stigmatise a son for the vices of his father, than applaud him for his virtue, and should some more just, yield the mere meed of praise, where is the solid benefit they confer on the virtue they pretend to admire?"

A sigh that escaped from the bosom of Montaldi, confirmed the justness of his remark.

Orsino resumed, "When the purport of my visit became known, his florid complexion turned to an ashy paleness; he could not directly charge his memory with any debt owing to Don de Isidora, and with cool deliberacy, begged to know the sum. One thousand pistoles, I replied; but if your memory fails you, I continued, much too haughtily, cannot gratitude put you in remembrance, when you shall contemplate your riches, this noble house

and equipage of state? He acted no longer the hypocrite, and the man whose heart so recently yearned to serve me, did not hesitate to say he must be greatly mistaken if he had not liquidated the demand some months before the catastrophe; then in the most insinuating manner, requested my departure, as he hourly expected his son. 'Oh! bring your son to me,' said I, 'that I may chastise him for his father.' He with some justness remarked the impropriety of insulting him in his own mansion, and the advantage my youth gave me over a defenceless old man. This was sufficient to recall my scattered senses, I turned on my heel and left the ungrateful monster.

"I was now reduced to the last extremity, and had recourse to the tendered purse of Anhalt. How delightful to think amid all my misfortunes, I had

yet one friend left, for such I looked upon Anhalt, and he never gave me cause to repent of my good opinion. His extraction was low to a degree, but Nature had gifted him with an honest heart, and a disposition at once cheerful and happy.

" Anhalt would be seen to caper and dance, clad in his scanty apparel, nor ever, as he would sometimes tell me, sighed at the hardness of his destiny. On finishing his sparing meal, he would warble the lightest air, and dance to the inviting sound of harmony: he looked into futurity no further than the prsent, leaving the provision for the morrow to the care of Him who had brought him to see the present day: he had learnt to guide the refractory mule—to bend his knee submissive to a comte—and to give with tolerable grace, a tender billet. His talents for erudition were not so

conspicuous; but though less flattering, were regarded by some as a wonder.

"At the age of sixteen our young mountaineer, with a lean mule, (the whole of his patrimony,) began his career in life, with the whole world to range in, but not a single span to call his own. The spirits of our light-hearted muleteer were not damped by this reflection; gay as ever, while guided by the bright beam of day, he regarded not the sable gloom of night, and when disabled from travelling, would answer, note for note, with the sweet musicians of the air: when day-break rendered his path perceptible, with his feathered companions he would take his flight, but perhaps not with the same hopes of good cheer, for no kind hand strewed the inviting morsel to regale the wanderer; but when he enjoyed the de-

frauded meal, the past was forgot amid thanks for the present.

"However, the cravings of hunger must be satisfied, he or his mule must be lost, and many a pang the resolve cost him, for he felt a kind of affection toward the poor animal—but Nature would have her right, besides, charity taught him to release the beast from the service of a master, who could not reward his toil with the scantiest fare; at least, if the property of another, he would be better provided for.

"Thus reasoned Anhalt, and the mule was sold. Not long could he live on the scanty produce without employ, and the near approach of famine urged him to own the bitter truth to the master of the hotel we put up at.

"This man was one of the many

good-inclined sort, who are never backward in doing a favour, provided it costs them nothing. He compassionated the deplorable condition of the young rover, and represented him to me in terms so recommendatory, that I desired to see him: he came, and told his tale with so much modesty that won my heart, and the good-humoured host returned me thanks for the honor I had done his judgment.

"My father took him into his service, and so well did he behave as entirely to supersede my valet in my favour, for whom, since the arrival of the little interloper, I had no further occasion. His fidelity daily increased, of which he gave me striking proofs in my distress.

"The money I borrowed of Anhalt became soon exhausted in spite of our frugality, for I kept no secret from him,

he was my adviser, my confident, my every thing; all I had now left were the jewels the merciful don had preserved for me—they too must be disposed of, fetch what they would; they were so—and I must not omit telling you, sold to the pious son of that spiritual father I mentioned to you before; he had the heavenly compassion to purchase them at little more than half-price, and this upright merchant had the unrighteousness to be pleased with a bargain, made by the descendant of a heretic, with whom his venerable parent (perhaps too prone to overlook his ungodliness), said he would blush to be seen talking; yet there was nothing like a blush, save the more glowing red, arising from pleasure at the advantageous purchase he had made.

"With our newly acquired stock of wealth we were comparatively happy,

though after defraying the expenses we had incurred, but little remained, and that little became more precious from the knowledge that it was our last, and only resource.

"The temporary calm I enjoyed, became disturbed on receiving an intimation that the perfidious Walsteid and his family had repaired to Italy. A thirst for revenge induced me to follow them: long and tedious were our journey, with scarce the means of procuring a conveyance, and I wandered about, a forlorn pennyless beggar. Walsteid eluded my pursuit, nor have I ever heard what became of him.

"At the close of a gloomy cheerless evening, best part of which had been spent in the vain endeavour of finding a human habitation, we observed the ruined state of this tower; its desolate

aspect struck me; there was something congenial in the gloom—it bore an analogy to the desolation of my mind, and in a voice of wild enthusiasm I exclaimed, 'Welcome! thrice welcome! thou haunts of despair!'

"A certain elevation had taken possession of my soul; I felt a soaring above weak mortality; yet in this moment of delirium I forgot not the extreme youth and gaiety of Anhalt, and his aversion to a retired life: I bespoke him accordingly, concluding with this trying question, 'Part we here, Anhalt?'

"The poor youth looked earnestly in my face, and burst into a flood of tears. I witnessed the struggle and sincerely pitied him, but could not prevail on him to desert me, though I assure you I used all my rhetoric.

"In this forlorn abode we passed the night, if such can be called passing the night which was employed in exploring the ruins. We discovered, by winding passages, free access to the subterraneous caverns of the castle it once had joined, but which was now totally demolished. On further examination we found a trap-door, through which we might enter the forest without observation. This was an acquisition indeed, for a new and sudden thought struck me: disgusted with mankind, I shunned society, and but for obtaining the necessaries of life, would have secluded myself for ever.

"Aroused from this state of apathy by the pressing calls of hunger, we planned a thousand schemes, but none met with our approbation, I say our, for owing to the fidelity of Anhalt, I consulted him on every occasion. What

was to be done? I blushed to employ my talents laudably, and from false pride, suffered myself to sink into the indolence of guilt. Where shall that wretch find a shelter, whom the public voice has accused, judged, and pronounced sentence on for crimes of non-commission? 'In inward rectitude,' some will say; but a sense of injury, a spirit of revenge will become excited by the taunts of the inward profligate, but the external amiable: I must confess I was influenced by the latter.

"The night was far advanced when the noise of wheels alarmed us. By the splendid retinue we concluded it must be some person of rank: we boldly made up to the carriage, each of us brandishing those weapons we had bought for self-defence, and which, actuated by the urgency of the moment, and blinded by error, I had still the

vanity to think were only used as such.

"The carriage contained only one gentleman and three ladies. In the encounter, the unfortunate Anhalt met an early and untimely death; I let go my prey, who escaped the meditated attack, and raised the inanimate body of Anhalt, on whose convulsed face I shed the bitterest tears I had ever shed. He spoke not—the icy hand of death had deprived me of his disinterested services. Convinced of the fatal truth, I receded from the spot with horror.

"Restless and dispirited, I arose early and sought the forest to divert, if possible, the chaos of my mind.

"Deprived of the society of Anhalt, I seemed lost indeed, without one human being or companion to com-

municate a thought; my steps, I may say, inadvertently led me to the fatal scene.

"Near the spot where Anhalt fell, I observed lying on the ground, a small portmanteau; I eagerly opened it, and to my great astonishment, found it full of gold. I concluded it must have fell from the travellers; but recollecting the unhappy consequence attendant on the acquisition, it urged me to exclaim, while I elevated the portmanteau, 'Curst gold! I hate thee!' and with an indignant spurn, hurled it from me.

"The words and action caught the attention of a miserable wretched looking old woman, clad in tatters, and limping on a crutch.

"She looked at me, and clasping her hands, 'Holy Virgin!' said she; 'thus

it is—how happy would the nineteenth part of that gold make me, while he to whom it belongs even curses it!'

"'So would you, old friend,' said I, in the anguish of my soul, 'had you lost a friend as I have.'

"The old woman wept bitterly, and moved my compassion. I entreated her to forgive the harsh expressions I had used, that my mind was greatly disturbed by the loss of a friend I highly prized.

"The poor old woman renewed her tears, and related her sad dismal history, telling me she was near expiring for want: I gave her some gold, bidding her come to the same spot once a week, where she would be sure of seeing me. She left me, articulating blessings till I could hear them no more.

"Time rolled heavily with me without a companion, and finding the conversation of Bianca not only beguiling, but entertaining, a thought struck me, as she had no relations, of prevailing on her to attend me, to which she consented, and after informing her who I was, bound her by an oath the most solemn, not to divulge to any human creature my place of abode. With her assistance I made this Gothic ruinous place as comfortable as possible, nor did I ever leave it but to make my nightly excursions, in several of which proving successful, I encreased my numbers, and instead of a solitary robber, became the captain of a strong band.

## CHAP. V.

"ONE day, going to buy some provisions for myself and men, I heard two men in earnest conversation, and listening to them, heard the name of Don Pedro mentioned: you may suppose I became attentive; all that I could collect from their confused jargon (not to call it by any other name) was, that my intended father-in-law had just taken possession of a castle, left him by a deceased relation.

"The man who communicated this intelligence I recognised to be a ser-

vant of the don's, with whom I had the good fortune to be a favourite.

"This was introduction sufficient; as soon as the man took leave of Claudius, I learnt from him his dismissal from the service of Don Pedro; and by what else I could gather, he seemed his inveterate enemy: he also informed me my false fair one was on the eve of marriage with a French gentleman.

"'The don,' said Claudius, 'intends giving an entertainment; I hear there will be grand doings.'

"I smiled at this, and asked him if he thought Albina loved her destined husband.

"'As much,' replied he, 'as I do, and I am sure I do not. 'Tis his gold,' said he, archly winking, 'that she likes

best, or she would not have acted by you in the manner she did, so kind and generous as you always were.'

" This simple apostrophe made my wounds bleed afresh, and recalled painful recollection; I found I still loved her.

" Stifling my emotion, I closely questioned Claudius, and by his answers, discovered his manner of living was equally as profligate as my own. I let drop the veil of disguise, and finding he suited my purpose, disclosed to him my new and dishonourable pursuit.

" Had I presented him with the greatest treasure, the fellow could not have been more overjoyed. He shook my hand, and betrayed symptoms of the most extravagant joy.

" The fête was to precede the nup-

tials. We then planned our scheme, and I conducted Claudius to our habitation.

"At the sight of a stranger my men started, but I soon re-assured them, and Claudius, in their presence, took the oath of fidelity.

"The banquet held on occasions like these, was partook of; after which, I told them of the booty that might be ours, if we had but courage.

"'And does our captain doubt that?' said they, shewing their scars.

"We then concerted measures, and it was agreed, that at a late hour, Claudius should go to see Leonard the porter, when on his duty, and beg for old acquaintance sake, to share their festivity. This boon granted, the gates would remain unguarded, and give free access to

myself and men. There secure, we could secret ourselves till the lateness of the hour should involve all the inmates in sleep, or into that more to be wished-for insensibility, the immediate consequence of intoxication, and so it really happened.

"When Claudius called on Leonard, he found him at his post, but so much inebriated as to render him no longer master of his actions.

"When the company were about taking leave of their rich entertainer, Claudius, for fear of a discovery that might involve all the artful contrivers in ruin, should the neglect of Leonard be detected, urged him to his duty, which he no longer cared to draw him from, having given time sufficient to his comrades.

"All was total silence, each domestic

acting the very brute—some lying in the hall, others in a state of insensibility—the costly plate had not been removed. What a glorious opportunity! Who could resist it?—Nor did we. But how different were their sensations to mine! All thoughts of gain were lost in the recollection of the injuries I had received. My disgrace, the very companions with whom I had associated—all, all combined to infuriate me, and stifle every sentiment of honour.

"We carried off, without interruption, all that was moveable.

"Claudius reminded us of the don's iron chest. 'His coffers are well lined I warrant me.'

"'This booty we must not let slip through our fingers,' said the rest.

"I would have had it otherwise, but

there was no disputing. A thought struck me that I could be amply revenged on my faithless mistress. Probably her chamber door might be locked. How surmount this difficulty?

"My men, willing to gratify my every wish, offered to sacrifice their lives if they did not obtain the senora for me.

"They overruled my scruples. 'Does our captain,' said they, 'shrink from danger?—It must not be.'

"Without allowing me time to utter a word, guided by Claudius, we were before the chamber door. My heart failed me.

"'Courage!' cried Claudius; and boldly bursted the lock, while with equal rudeness, he entered.

"The affrighted Albina shrieked violently, upon which I ordered Claudius to comply with the request she made of being allowed to dress herself.

"He withdrew, at the same time guarding the entrance to prevent an escape which we thought she meditated by her strange acquiescence, and so it proved.

"The room had two doors, by the opposite of which she reached the hall. Her cries alarmed one of the domestics, and we found it no easy task to elude his vigilance; he had evaporated the fumes of the wine, and intrepidly came up to us, joined by three staggering fellows. The swords were wrested from their unsteady weild. Enraged at their cowardice, he aimed a mighty blow; too sure, alas! the aim—it stretched poor Claudius on the ground, who

could not speak, but pressed his bleeding lips to my hand, and with life's last convulsive throb, sighed his last breath on the hand I had not the power to remove.

"This was to me a moment of desperation. The piercing shrieks of Albina calling on her loved, her aged father, melted my very heart, and I should certainly have restored her to liberty had she not rekindled my revenge by calling on her lover. A sound so discordant struck daggers to my soul; it reminded me of what I once had been. With eyes flashing the fury that possessed me, I bore her off triumphant.

"Albina remained fainting in my arms. With difficulty she was restored. Her restoration was but momentary, for on discovering me, she relapsed, and continued in fits several hours.

"Bianca attended her many days, for

her indisposition alarmed me; but with returning health my rage returned, and in spite of sighs, tears, and supplications, I led her to the altar.

"She solemnly forbid the ceremony, and the priest absolutely refused, to my extreme mortification, till feeling the weight of a purse I slipped into his hand, the *good* father's qualms of conscience subsided. I conducted my fair bride to her new residence with all bridal pomp.

"Time cured the unavailing sorrow of Albina, and she submitted to her lot with tolerable or feigned cheerfulness. She was no longer watched; the spies were removed, and we left her alone to enjoy her meditations; at least, so it appeared, but I kept a guard to watch her actions, when she supposed herself unobserved. Finding she made not an ungenerous use of this privilege, suspicion vanished,

and I in reality left her alone. She took no advantage of this trust for several times; whether from the notion that our stay would not be long, or from fear of detection, I cannot tell.

"One day going at some distance we were apprized of the arrival of a rich senor, who it was reported, would be laden with immense treasure. We were informed of the road he would take, and the kind informer received a promise of reward adequate to the prize. We returned home in high spirits. I acquainted Albina with the information; she lamented my absence in terms so tender, and seemingly sincere, that gave me no reason to apprehend her sorrow was fictitious.

"Success crowned our adventure, and considerably enriched, I returned to the tower; but Albina welcomed me not—

she had fled. Finding a pretext for sending Bianca out of the way, she took advantage of her absence and eloped; nor have I (though the most diligent search has been made) found out the place of her retreat.

"Here ends the recital of adventures, uninteresting of themselves, but which have gained importance from the attention you honoured them with."

Montaldi returned a suitable compliment, and Orsino continued.

"Never did mortals enjoy a more perfect state of felicity than we do. We smile and trample on laws insufficient to restrain us. The niggard, deaf to the plea of suffering merit, we make comply with our bold exaction, and withhold not our mite from the child of misfortune. The happiness of my ad-

herents is my only care, and need I add, that care will be pleasingly augmented, if I am allowed to class yourself among them. Say, senor, does such pleasure await me?"

Orsino observed his reluctance, for Montaldi was a perfect novice in the art of dissembling.

Might he not seemingly comply, and by those means ensure safety by flight? No; he disdained deceiving even a robber, and boldly spoke his sentiments.

A glow of anger tinged the cheek of Orsino; he was disappointed in the answer of Montaldi.

Not all the eloquence he was master of could shake his principles. Unawed by danger, Vincent bid proud defiance

to every menace, and betrayed no symptoms of mean and cowardly fear. He pitied the failings of Osino, and lamented that infatuation should so far mislead a mind naturally good.

The persuasion he used claimed compassion more than indignation; for while it shewed how low vice can degrade humanity, it betrayed the generous wish of imparting to another an equal share of his false happiness.

Orsino wondered within himself at the refusal of Montaldi, but resolved to wait a few days before he enforced compliance.

Left to himself, he trusted the unhappy captive would refuse no terms to obtain liberty. But Montaldi had a resource that neither Orsino nor those who

yield to guilt can ever enjoy. He shrunk not from confinement; it had no terrors for him.

When night came it filled him not with dismay; he peacefully sought repose, and undisturbed by frightful visions, awoke refreshed. The tenderly cherished name of Laurentini would sometimes escape him; the recollection was followed by the pang of regret—what would she think of him? His strange disappearance, and his mysterious meeting with Ernesto, all tended to excite suspicion.

"What a fate is mine!" he exclaimed with vehemence, as fresh ideas crowded on his mind. "Oh! hateful execrable name—your cruel malevolence would be surely gratified, were you acquainted with my sufferings—but if deaf to, would

you regard me? Impossible! you know not justice."

Then would he pace the narrow limits of his prison, and indulge in all the luxury of woe.

Orsino, who beheld these struggles, drew from them a favourable conclusion; he allowed for the repugnance an unvitiated mind must naturally feel, and expected not an immediate acquiescence.

In order to tempt Montaldi, he permitted him to enjoy temporary liberty. Grateful for this indulgence, Vincent passed the time much more to his satisfaction.

In passing to his solitary chamber, one night, at an hour somewhat earlier than usual, a soft sigh stole on his ear.

He paused—an object clad in white flitted before him. " Is this an illusion," thought Montaldi, as he quickly followed the figure till it entered a room, the door of which was open. A lamp that was placed on the table revealed to him the fugitive. It was a female of exquisite beauty; her countenance pale, but expressive, strangely interested him.

At a loss how to proceed, he remained in a state of indecision, afraid to advance and averse to retreat. Might he not be of service to the lovely captive? for such her appearance bespoke her to be. A slight noise he accidentally made, caused her to raise her head. She fixed on Montaldi her beautiful black eyes.

Confused and abashed, he apologized for his intrusion.

thither, he encountered Orsino. Filled with alarm, he endeavoured to avoid him, and gently passing on, sought sanctuary in the first room he came to.

He softly opened the door, which to his extreme mortification, he found was but another communication to the spot he had just quitted, and instead of avoiding the object he had fled from, it placed him before his view.

Orsino suspecting Montaldi's intention was to escape, if possible, narrowly watched him. Luckily for Vincent, he saw him not, which he soon joyfully discovered.

Wholly engrossed in the contemplation of his own schemes, he used not precaution, little imagining the cause of his midnight watchfulness was so near him, and even within the hearing of his guilty effusions.

Montaldi, the preserver of my father's life ?"

" Yes, senora, I am that fortunate being, happy in having rendered him a trifling service, for which I am too highly honoured by the acknowledgments of the fair Rosalia."

He then inquired after the Almerini family. At the mention of Ernesto, Rosalia blushed excessively, perhaps at the recollection of the solicitude he must feel on her account.

Montaldi related the accident by which he fell into the power of the banditti, and would have been indulged with a similar return, had not the noise of approaching footsteps warned him to depart.

Bidding the senora a hasty farewell, he retired to his chamber. In his way

ing advantage of his light, regained his chamber.

The words of Orsino created in his bosom new fears; should he put his threat in execution, what alternative had he? "But death is preferable to a life of ignominy! I will perish first. But Rosalia! who shall rescue her? Must she, the victim of treachery, waste her bloom within these hated walls?—Insupportable idea. Oh! Ernesto! valued friend! the knowledge of her fate would nerve your arm."

Occupied by these painful cogitations he passed a sleepless night; his unrefreshed looks escaped not Orsino, and he regarded him with scrutiny.

Montaldi, though perfectly recovered of his wound, affected to feel much pain, the better to disguise his con-

fusion, and the deception succeeded; he trembled lest an unguarded word should betray the knowledge he had obtained, and endanger the safety of Rosalia, or prevent the hopes he entertained of effecting her escape.

"Ernesto," thought he, "will be undeceived; but how account for the ruffians in whose company he found me? The attack made upon him may brand me their accomplice; and my strange disappearance too, combines to pronounce me guilty. Foul imputation! disgraceful odium! when shall I wipe thee off!"

The innate rectitude of his principles enabled him to support with fortitude the conflict, and with tolerable composure he awaited the approach of night.

Rosalia, all anxiety, passed the day in the utmost agitation; her meeting with Montaldi had given birth to the liveliest hope. Restored to her father, she should again behold her beloved Ernesto, reward his constancy, and by making him happy, become equally so. She pitied his feelings, and participated in those of her amiable cousin: the duca too, what must be his sufferings? Tenacious of a theme so tender, she strove to banish retrospection, and awaited in breathless expectation the arrival of Montaldi.

A gentle rap at her door revived her drooping spirits; his presence gladdened her, and with a cheerful smile, she bid him be seated. He obeyed her invitation, and she informed him that one evening about twilight as she was indulging thought in the retirement of

mber, her attendant rushed into
bathed in tears; alarmed at
nce, she demanded an ex-

My mother," replied the poor crea-ture, "is dead!" and renewed her tears.

"I tried all in my power to console her, but almost convulsed with grief, she yielded to despair.

"The venerable Benedicta had long excited my compassion, she was the widow of an honest industrious peasant, who had in his youth served my father with fidelity, and received from him as the reward of his faithfulness, the cot-tage inhabited by Benedicta.

"Her sudden death shocked me, and as my father was absent from home,

with more condescension than discretion, I accompanied the unhappy creature. She overwhelmed me with thanks, which greatly affected me.

"We had not proceeded many yards when two men completely masked, passed by us.

"'Tis she,' said one, in a whisper.

"An unusual tremor seized me, and with faltering steps I attempted to hurry on, but overpowered by faintness, I had nearly sunk on the ground—the trembling Benedicta attempted to support me: the men pushed past her and disengaging me from her feeble hold, conveyed me away in their arms.

"Unmindful of my tears and supplications, they walked on with the utmost rapidity; presently they were met by a

man leading a horse, on which I was placed, and my companions followed at a short distance. In vain I entreated and implored the man to tell me whither I was to be conducted, he remained sullenly silent, nor deigned an answer.

" My fate I now feared was inevitable, yet who could be the instigator of so daring an attempt? for it was evident from the words of the men, my person was familiar to them. Perhaps they had mistook me—encouraged by this flattering idea, I ventured to expostulate, but with the same success. The masks interchanged some words with each other in a voice so low that I could not hear.

" The noise of horsemen gladdened me with the hope of relief. The alarm of the masks seemed extreme, and they would have hurried me on. My reiterated shrieks attracted the notice of

the strangers, who swiftly rode up, and after a most desperate resistance, the banditti (for such they were) succeeded in rescuing me.

" Scarce knowing whether I had reason to rejoice at, or lament my deliverance, I was still thankful for the timely interference; it at least snatched me from the power of a premeditated enemy.

Though surrounded by almost insurmountable difficulties my spirits did not fail me: I respired more free, and became unusually exhilirated. All my enquiries relative to the fate of my faithful attendant met with no answer, and extremely anxious on her account, I suffered all the torments of suspense.

" 'Twas to no effect I made the most liberal offers to my companions if they

would set me at liberty: deaf to my entreaties and equally unmoved by my threats, they persisted in their design of conveying me to their dreadful abode. Resistance was vain, neither did I attempt it, lest opposition should exasperate them, and with patient submission I resigned myself to my fate.

"The space of an hour had elapsed, when they suddenly halted and alighted at the tower; the sound of the bugle brought Bianca, who admitted us, and I was immediately conducted into the presence of their captain.

"To you who have seen Orsino I need not remark that there is something in his manners more calculated to inspire confidence than create terror; his countenance would dissipate instead of excite suspicion. On this discovery I congratulated myself, and drew from thence a favourable conclusion.

"'Tis unnecessary to relate the sophistry he made use of to gloss over his conduct, when I appealed to his feelings (which I perceived were moved) and besought him to grant me my liberty. His refusal he asserted was founded on the active principle of self-defence; my enlargement would endanger his safety, and he would not forego a real advantage for the charm of a mere sound: pity, he said, was a sentiment often pathetically described, but seldom felt; and that he was willing to confess self-love alone reigned pre-eminent in his bosom.

"From such a character I had nothing to hope. Sensible of all the miseries that awaited me, my mind sunk into a state of despondency, from which nothing could arouse me but the confidence I placed in the promise of the Senor Montaldi; his well-known intrepidity, when stimulated by the incli-

nation he ever feels of serving the unfortunate, will I trust deliver me from this dreadful captivity."

A sigh of inability escaped from the bosom of Montaldi, as he thanked the senora for her communication. Flattered by her good opinion, could he have realized it, his own happiness would have been considered but a small sacrifice. Her sanguine expectations filled him with anguish. Should he give death to her hopes by telling her they were fallacious? Impossible! he said every thing that friendship could suggest; and with the kindest assurances, left her.

It was now he felt the loss of liberty—felt that social ties can interest a generous mind, even to a forgetfulness of self. To alleviate the distress of Rosalia was all he thought of. But the

means?—The proposal of Orsino flashed on his mind, and what to procure his own safety, had been rejected with disdain, met now with the honor of reflection. The offer seemed less repugnant to his feelings; he started not from it. The whole prospect assumed a softer aspect. Already in imagination, the happy Rosalia was restored to her friends; he heard their joyful acclamations—the rapture of Ernesto, the praise of Laurentini.

"Here," exclaimed he, with emphasis, "I feel I am selfish. 'Tis to gain thy approbation, Laurentini, beauteous fair! Yet why seek to obtain her favour? Will she bestow it on a robber—an assassin? No; her gentle nature will recoil with horror from such a character. Then must I behold Rosalia languish in captivity?—Maddening reflection!"

The unhappy Montaldi passed a sleepless night. The visible alteration of his looks alarmed Orsino. Some important scheme he had in agitation, nothing less than the betrayal of the whole banditti. Fear once awakened, impossibilities became practicable; guilt and a long train of imaginary terrors harrowed up his very soul. When Montaldi smiled, it was a smile of triumph; if he appeared thoughtful, it was anxiety for the success of his scheme; if he entered into conversation, it was to disguise his sentiments; and indeed he sought to assign a reason for his every movement.

Montaldi greatly perplexed, prepared to meet Rosalia. He had determined within himself, to relate the only probability he had of effecting her escape.

Tears of disappointment bedewed her lovely cheeks.

Montaldi softened, promised acquiescence, and actually at that moment would have kept his word, so much was he affected by her grief.

"What! Montaldi become a robber!" she exclaimed, while the abhorrence she felt at the idea was depicted on her countenance. "No, perfidious Orsino, you are unworthy of such a triumph. Rather let me remain your prisoner to eternity."

"You shall, senora—by Heavens you shall be free!" said Montaldi, ill concealing the perturbation of his mind. "Fickle, irresolute being that I was! Why did I mention the means? Was it merely to raise obstacles? Was it to——"

"To display your exalted mind?" said Orsino, who had overheard their

conversation, " and the noble struggles of Montaldi ?—Would I had known such as thee, amiable Montaldi ! Thy single example had taught me what virtue was; inspired with love for her sacred character, I had acted from inclination. I beheld indigent merit consigned to oblivion, while the successful profligate was publicly countenanced; and because a few individuals had proved ungrateful, I pronounced mankind in general as such. From thence I drew the unfavourable conclusion, that none but the vicious enjoyed felicity.—Mistaken idea! I envied their false happiness, and tasted of the intoxicating draught. An insatiate thirst despoiled even the charm of possession; I coveted whatever was unattainable—the just punishment of that man who has not learned self-command; he is the slave of his passions, and may in vain seek repose. 'Tis not for an enlightened mind,

however soured by disappointment, or wounded by the treachery of false friends, to expect to find a resource in the allurements of vice. To render the debasing association agreeable, a previous preparation is necessary, for there is the hour of reflection—the pang of consciousness, that continually reminds of the degradation. We start, completely humiliated, and fain would fly from ourselves, but 'tis impossible—the gulph is fixed, and Orsino condemned for crimes unjustly imputed to him, determined to commit them in verity.—Fatal resolution!—you have affixed to a once unsullied name, the foul, the indelible stain!"

At this his fortitude forsook him, and great appeared his internal agony.

"Depart!" he exclaimed, addressing Rosalia and Montaldi; "you are freed from exile. Betray me if you please;

let the ministers of justice seize me—I am their willing victim. I wish not for life; it is hateful to me. The soul of Orsino shrinks and recedes with horror from disgrace; and yet a something within whispers, the soul that shrunk not from guilt, ought to receive with submission debasement, as the natural consequence of those deeds which being dark, cannot but reflect a shade as dismal. Oh! think not the remorse which now afflicts me, has till this moment been unfelt; compunction has tinged this guilty cheek—regret has wrung this heart, but it was unavailing."

Perceiving the lips of Montaldi severing, "Thank me not," said he; "I merit none."

The Senora Rosalia attempted to speak, but Orsino was obstinately deaf to what he called reproaches, persisting

he was entitled to no acknowledgment; and with a smile the most persuasive, reminded them of the lateness of the hour.

Rosalia and Montaldi immediately separated, and Orsino retired, not to seek repose, as he had said, but to calm the emotion of his bosom.

The scene he had just witnessed, by recalling past events, renewed his sorrow. The anticipated felicity of Rosalia and Montaldi afforded him the sweetest satisfaction—a satisfaction superior to any he had hitherto experienced. It aroused him from the apathy he had sunk into, and revealed the welcome truth that he was not insensible to pleasure.

The senora scarce crediting the happy reverse that had taken place, spent

the night in grateful acknowledgments to that All-powerful Being who alone could have worked a change so sudden. Her extravagant joy precluded sleep.

## CHAP. VI.

THE pleasure of Montaldi was not so tumultuous; his prospects were less flattering. It is true, he valued liberty, but all places seemed alike to him; no anxious bosom felt solicitude for him—no cheerful voice would hail with gladness his return—the soft soothing of friendship he was a stranger to. But not long did he indulge these selfish ideas; they were all forgot in the bliss of Rosalia. He warmly congratulated her on the termination of her difficulties, and offered his services, which were ac-

cepted, to conduct her to the villa of the Senor Di Bartolo.

At breakfast, Orsino appeared with a cheerful countenance, and renewed the conversation of the preceding night. The usual sternness of his aspect was softened by a look that bespoke the harmony of his feelings. His manners always irresistible, were on this occasion, peculiarly so. The mingled sensations that agitated him, raised a conflict not easily to be subdued.

He observed the embarrassment of Rosalia and Montaldi; their looks far more eloquent than speech, spoke the thanks they would have uttered, but language was denied them.

Breakfast being ended, Orsino gently led them to the outside of those gates which they feared would inclose them

for ever, saying, while a glowing red suffused his fine and manly features, "It is but just that he who confined you without ceremony, should liberate you in the same ungracious manner."

"Oh! say not ungracious," would have said Rosalia and Montaldi, but the gates quickly closing, precluded any further intercourse, leaving them well pleased at the little manœuvre of Orsino, and called forth the sigh of sympathy, that a heart like his, so susceptible of sensibility, should be inspired with an ignoble sentiment, and that talents so eminently conspicuous, should be so strangely perverted, awakened their deepest regret.

Breathing wishes the most fervent for the repose of that bosom they had left forlorn, they bent their steps toward the villa.

The heart of Rosalia dilated; it expanded with that enthusiastic rapture felt by the traveller on re-visiting his native home. Each plant, each shrub she hailed with sweet recognition, as so many friends welcoming her return. From these pleasing objects, she directed her attention to animated Nature. On beholding the peasants, tears of gratitude coursed down her cheeks; she thought of her father, her relations, and the fond association of ideas caused the most delightful thrill she had ever felt.

Turning to her musing companion, she endeavoured to draw him into conversation.

Montaldi, not so pleasantly occupied, like her, had been indulging reflection, but of that poignant nature which filled him with the deepest melancholy. He wished to appear cheerful, but the

effort was too painful, and he sunk into a state of abstraction, out of which he was aroused on beholding the villa.

"The services of Vincent Montaldi are no longer necessary," said he, addressing Rosalia; "but should any unforeseen accident render them essential, the Senora di Bartolo will command me."

So saying, he abruptly departed, leaving Rosalia in the utmost consternation.

"Amiable, but mysterious being!" said she, mentally, "what strange fatality presides o'er thy destiny?"

Rosalia paused. She was now in her paternal dwelling; the domestics flocked around her. She heard her father's voice; her heart bounded, and instantly she was in his arms.

They could not speak; tears were their only language. They gazed at each other with unutterable expression. At length "My child!—my father!" was alternately repeated, and all enquiries yielded to the fond interchange of affection.

The rapture of Di Bartolo fully atoned for the anguish he felt at the loss of his daughter.

On his return, sighs and tears were alone heard throughout his so late peaceful mansion. The distracted Benedicta related the fate of Rosalia. Grief, rage, and madness, rent the bosom of the afflicted parent. Who could the monsters be, or who their employer? The air resounded with his lamentations. Messengers were dispatched in every direction; hope and

fear by turns agitated the anguished father.

At the sight of a stranger, his heart palpitated—they brought news of his Rosalia; but disappointment marked the sad reverse, and Di Bartolo, a prey to sorrow, witnessed the return of the weeping train without the object of their pursuit.

To the duca he flew for consolation, but Almerini too much affected to afford any, could only with him deplore the heavy loss they had sustained.

The sad intelligence nearly overpowered Laurentini, and if grief like their's, admitted of augmentation, it was to be found in her unrestrainable sorrow.

But what were their feelings, com-

pared to thine, unhappy Ernesto?—Though the united tears of a father, an uncle, and cousin, were shed, could they equal the pangs of a lover? and such a lover, so constant, so ardent, so impassioned; when reason came to his aid, the youthful Ernesto, at the head of his father's vassals, renewed a search, that alas! proved unsuccessful.

Wearied with conjecture, he knew not to whom to impute the catastrophe. Who could be the author of his woe? Rosalia had no enemies. The wretches engaged in the daring attempt could not be common robbers, or gain their sole object—they had not detained her person. Whom could it be?—suspicion rested on Altidore di Viralva. From that malignant being he had every thing to fear.

Swift as darts the vivid lightning,

aye swifter did the half-formed thought communicate the fire of madness. Jealousy became kindled, and on Di Viralva he longed to wreak his vengeance.

"But the surmise is groundless; perfidious as he is, he dare not commit an act of such barefaced treachery. No, he would fear the just chastisement of his audacity. It is some individual yet more daring; but could not the innocence, the tears of Rosalia, divert you from your fell purpose!"

That voice could never plead in vain; persecution itself disarmed, must perforce protect. Yes, cherished be the thought, my Rosalia is preserved, and soon will bless with her presence these longing eyes.

The Marchese di Viralva had long wooed, but wooed in vain, the fair Ro-

salia. The aversion she felt toward him became heightened by the profligacy of his character. Her refusal irritated this haughty noble; and burning with rage he ill could conceal, he retired overwhelmed with chagrin, his pride completely mortified by the humiliating denial, raised in his bosom a conflict of contending passions, the most predominant of which was revenge.

The ferocity of his nature softened for awhile into a something resembling gentleness, now resumed its usual sternness. Selfish and contracted, the peace of mind of another held with him but a secondary consideration. His implacable spirit could ill brook the imaginary affront he fancied he had received from the Senora di Bartolo. Her rejection of him, and acceptance of Ernesto, was a source of mortification that admitted of no appeasement.

The youthful Almerini, blest with the approval of Rosalia, regarded not his impotent menace, and living only in her smiles, would not exchange them for the frowns of an enemy, only formidable as he invaded her peace of mind, and interrupted the felicity he could not prevent.

Compelled to relinquish his pretensions, the disappointed and humbled Di Viralva returned to his castello, there to cherish inbred malice.

On his arrival, he was informed a sick stranger, during his absence had been admitted. He expressed a wish to see his guest.

The sensations of Manfredoni were such as are felt by the noble-minded, though indigent, when receiving an insult from the great.

The marchese affected courtesy he could not feel, but that courtesy wore a different aspect, on discovering that the object of his external benevolence was the man he most hated, because the most injured. The feelings of Manfredoni were little less acute on the discovery, and feigning sudden indisposition, he begged to be re-conveyed to the room he had just quitted.

This request was willingly complied with, and now a frown sat on the brow of greatness; a something like apprehension filled his mind, but the thought was as quickly rejected. "Had the Marchese di Viralva ought to fear from the impotent revenge of the destitute Manfredoni?"

"What are these wounds to those inflicted on thy bosom, hapless Almeria!" said Manfredoni, when he found

himself alone; " and could ought but insensibility have induced your brother to receive succour from the destroyer of your peace? No, injured innocence, sainted sister—let thy pale vision receive from Manfredoni the assurance that your injuries live still in his memory—live with that keen remembrance, as if the act of to-day. That pure being, to whose paternal solicitude you granted your promise of forbearance, is now no more. His compassionate bosom will not be afflicted at vengeance wreaked on him, whom only the common ties of nature could honour by the name of brother; ties which consanguinity alike confers on the villain and the amiable. Departed excellence, death has freed me from the oath gratitude exacted; it spared the base, that virtue like thine should not suffer."

Angelo Manfredoni was the only son

of an officer, whose claims to promotion were only valour and unsullied honour; but these unaccompanied by interest, procured for him nought, save fame and scanty pay, which could ill support his orphan son and daughter. To inspire a love for arms in the youthful bosom of Angelo, employed those hours not claimed by rigid duty, and the veteran had the happiness of beholding his persuasions produced the effect he desired.

But how to provide for Almeria was his heaviest affliction. Remove Angelo, and where the protector her orphan state required? This reflection filled his paternal bosom with the deepest anguish. But death soon put a period to his anxiety, and left the children of his affection to encounter all those difficulties their circumscribed finances would subject them.

Angelo now relinquished all idea of a military life. To protect his sister, he with the fondest affection, assured her should be his only and constant care.

The severe moment of filial sorrow was kindly softened by the friendly and benevolent attention of the Marchesa di Varalva, who, with great condescension, insisted on the orphans passing some months at her castello.

The marchesa had been for many years a widow. She had two sons; the Marchese Lorenzo, and the Senor Altidore. The most amiable qualities distinguished the marchese from his brother. Altidore was at once the most consummate hypocrite and villain. Nature, as if to permit the deception, had formed him with a countenance and person uncommonly handsome. For

exterior grace he boasted of an advantage over Lorenzo, whose plain and unattracting visage concealed a heart replete with every virtue.

Early devoted to study, he dedicated to science those hours employed by his brother in uninteresting conversation with the fair. One sought the casino, the other retirement: the most opposite amusements were chosen by each; no unity subsisting between beings so dissimilar.

With maternal solicitude the marchesa observed this distinction. It was in vain she remonstrated with Altidore, he disregarded her admonitions. A new project now engrossed his attention; he fancied he felt a partiality for Manfredoni's lovely orphan daughter; his heart whispered she was essential to his peace. Mistaken idea!—it was not love

he felt—he was not susceptible of that passion, which so far from injuring the object of its affection, seeks every opportunity of affording happiness.

The thought gave him but one concern, that was, lest his imaginary passion should excite the notice of his mother, and she interrupt his promised bliss; but death speedily removed this unequalled woman—she died suddenly.

This unexpected stroke fell heavy on the orphans; in the marchesa they lost a valuable friend. But disappointed in the creature, the directing hand of hope pointed to the Creator; and to Him they looked up for protection.

The castello bereft of the amiable marchesa, Manfredoni considered an unsafe asylum for his sister, and after the funeral they removed to one more hum-

ble, but to which necessity reconciled them.

The brothers used every argument to dissuade them from this step, but Manfredoni and his sister were resolute.

"You will not then bar my entrance," said Altidore, as they departed. "Alas! unhappy Almeria, would you had, your heart had been spared a pang; for there he was too willingly admitted. The external grace of Altidore was beyond resistance, and what inexperienced mind could suspect that a smile the most fascinating, disguised thoughts of the darkest nature.

Manfredoni with pain observed that tears frequently moistened the meals partook of by Almeria. Of her he demanded the cause. She avoided an explanation with alarm, that filled him

with a thousand dreadful forebodings. The suspence he endured was far more terrible than a confirmation of his worst suspicions.

The most horrible conviction at length flashed on his mind, for strangers spoke of Almeria, and her lapse from virtue. The beguiling demon, that assumes the form of love, under his disguise, had seduced one of the most innocent beings that ever fell a victim to the destructive snare.

Altidore, like the demon of the storm, smiled at the tempest he had raised. The just reproaches of Manfredoni he treated with contemptuous disdain, and imputed to frailty what had been granted to the purest love.

This was too much for Almeria to support; this added insult to injury,

and completed the ruin he had begun. The severest self reproach finished what silent contrition might have averted—the death of Almeria!

The wounded honour of her brother, and her own disgrace extinguished the feeble lamp of life, and by her death, Almeria expiated the soft offence—an offence committed against discretion and ingenuousness, more than virtue; for if love is a crime, Almeria, you died guilty.

The tenderest sympathy was shewn to the sufferer, by the Marchese Lorenzo. It was in vain he urged Altidore to do that justice the unhappy victim received from him, while from her forgiveness, and the gratitude of Manfredoni he obtained a promise that sheltered the guilty Altidore from the punishment he so highly merited, and

which not even his rank would have protected him from, for Manfredoni scorned disgrace, possessed honour, and was an Italian.

But to the pleadings of paternal love he yielded revenge; the unhappy victim of seduction expired, pronouncing pardon on him who had wounded her peace, alas! beyond a cure.

Through the interest of the marchese, Manfredoni was enabled to follow his favourite pursuit; he hoped in the tumult of war to quell that which raged within his own bosom. But unsuccessful in his search after that which was never found, years brought no alleviation to his sorrow.

The Marchese di Viralva, after his departure, had married the daughter of Comte Della Torrini, and became the

father of a son sixteen years of age, when Manfredoni re-visited his native country.

None beheld with more sincere and heartfelt satisfaction the happiness of the marchese, than did Manfredoni; his congratulations were warm, because they came from the heart.

But this happy being; this sincere friend, was soon to taste of the bitter draught. His beloved, his idolized wife, was snatched from him by the hand of death, and at the same period duty summoned Manfredoni to distant climes; nor did he return till some years after the melancholy catastrophe. But what a revolution had been wrought in that period; the marchese and the young Lorenzo were no more! and none left to support the title but the vicious Alti-

dore; the last and most worthless branch of the Viralva family.

With indescribable emotion he turned from the castello, nor so far forgot the injuries of Almeria, as to hold converse with the author of her woe.

The stilletto of banditti, as he was walking one night very late, pierced his bosom, and deprived him of sense. Some herdsmen discovering his wounded state, and influenced by the ostentatious display of benevolence made by Altidore, brought him to the castello.

The marchese was absent; nevertheless, the vassals gave him admittance, where proper care was taken of him. His wounds though numerous were not dangerous; a violent effusion of blood had enfeebled him, and caused a temporary deprivation of sense.

On the return of Di Viralva, Manfredoni was informed his host wished to see him. Scarce able to move from weakness, he obeyed; but when he beheld in the person that stood before him, Altidore di Viralva, what pen can do justice to his feelings! He begged to be re-conveyed to the chamber he had quitted—a relapse took place, and confined him for weeks, insensible, in the castello of the man he despised.

No sooner was his health amended than he bid adieu to the hateful walls of the Castello di Viralva, resolving never more to enter them voluntary.

It is true he harboured a something like revenge, which the laws of hospitality bade him restrain; the task imposed seemed hard, for his memory was tenacious, and continually reminded him of injuries which even the oblivion of

time could not obliterate, and still in a state of indecision, he loitered within the precincts of the castello. Unwise determination! for the frequent sight of Viralva inflamed a wound but slightly healed, and served to perpetuate what, for his own peace of mind, he wished to forget.

## CHAP. VII.

Di Viralva, relieved from the presence of a guest obnoxious to him, began to recover his spirits; it is true he had awakened sensations not of the most pleasing kind, but with the object, fear also vanished, and the consciousness of security might have given birth to tranquillity, could such an inmate inhabit a bosom the abode of every turbulent passion.

With Altidore one scheme was but to be exchanged for another; fickle and unsettled, he continued not long in a

pacific mood. Ernesto and Rosalia enjoying the sweets of mutual affection, were objects that excited his envy; his malignancy became aroused, and he longed to disturb the happiness he could not partake. That dastard spirit, mean enough to be gratified with secret revenge, taught him to practise disguise, the better to shield him from the resentment he dreaded, yet abjectly sought to provoke under covert.

With cool deliberacy he awaited the moment that should place the defenceless Rosalia in his power.

"I will teach that haughty fair, submission," would he say, "she shall respect the being she has despised, and know that to provoke Di Viralva is to incur danger not easily shunned: in vain shall the vaunting Almerini threaten punishment he knows not on whom to

inflict, while I, enjoying the poignancy of his feelings, shall employ in self-gratulation the time he devotes to unavailing and fruitless pursuit."

To effect his project required address, and no small portion of daring.

Among the numerous vassals of Viralva, none suited his purpose so well as Orlando, Theodore, and Velasquez; their fidelity he had tried, and successful on similar occasions, he drew from thence a favourable conclusion.

Some beings there are, so amiable, that, regardless of the object, they perform the act, and seek alone from benevolence their reward: so these men, the slaves of guilt, served their master from propensity more than submission—when he willed vengeance, it was their pleasure to obey; the lucre of

sordid gain had been a pretext far better for these lovers of mischief, than the zeal they shewed to abet vice. Their persons were familiar to Rosalia, but then disguise was easy, and the best safeguard of security.

With suitable injunctions the myrmidons departed, full bent on the execution of their foul plot. Long however did they await the expected hour of success, for Rosalia, seldom out, and rarely alone, had repeatedly disappointed the agents of vice. The death of Benedicta favoured their plan, and the unsuspecting victim of humanity fell into the snare prepared for her.

An emissary of the marchese flew to acquaint him of their success. Revenge swelled his bosom, and the anticipated triumph encreased his guilty exultation. This was a moment for which all other

gave way—this a feeling for which he would not have exchanged kingdoms; it afforded him the supremest happiness—happiness considerably augmented, when contrasted with the misery of Rosalia, and the despair of Ernesto; "The old Bartolo too, these smiles shall mock his tears, taunt at the grief he weakly vents, scoff at his woe, and exultant say, 'This the reverse of what you dealt to Di Viralva.' Ye spirits who protect the brave, avenge their wrongs, and lead them on to victory. Tell me, I ask, could I do less, than from the hand of a disabled enemy, snatch the fell weapon uplifted to my breast, and—and what? Return the ill-directed blow!"

Thus reasoned Altidore. His joy, too boisterous for restraint, had near betrayed him, but with a well dissembled concern, he heard the story recounted

by the Senor di Bartolo's vassals—even proffered his services. Too generous to admit suspicion, the amiable sufferers believed him true: felt grateful for his good will, and though not accepted, the offer stood registered on the tablet of their breasts.

Altidore, unmoved by sighs, unmelted by tears, panted alone for the confirmation he had not yet enjoyed, and for to taste this more refined—this additional pleasure, as soon as prudence would allow, he hastened to the place of rendezvous.

As some poor wretch, whom buoyant hope has taught to expect mercy's reprieve, with dire dismay views in its stead the mandate of condemnation, so felt the disappointed Di Viralva.

Rosalia had escaped his power, and

not without strong efforts to detain her, as the many wounds of the ruffians bore ample testimony.

"Rescued from you by robbers!" said Viralva, repeating the words of Orlando.

"Yes, Senor Marchese, and a more desperate band never attacked vassals determined to serve their lord, or bleed in his cause."

"You speak courageously, my honest fellow, and though ill success has crowned the attempt, in my favour, you shall reap your reward. But I am satisfied; Rosalia secure in some noisome cavern, sheds the radiance of her charms on its damp walls, or excites pleasure in the eye of lowering bandit—by scorn the thought expelled, he sues, he pleads, calls force to his aid—and I am revenged."

Well pleased with this arrangement, Altidore departed, using every precaution necessary to deceive the eye of enquiry; even Ernesto gave him all imaginable credit for the anxiety he so well counterfeited, and this seeming act of generosity converted the rivals into friends; together they talked of a theme interesting to both, though each were influenced by far different motives; together they devised schemes for the recovery of Rosalia, and seemingly together, put them in effect; but failing of success, hope became extinct; and in the languor of despair, Rosalia was given up for lost; when lo! Benedicta, the messenger of ill news, to the distracted Di Bartolo, now gladdened his delighted ears with the name of Rosalia! The grateful sound thrilled through his frame, and all the father kindled in his bosom, and for this moment of rapture, he forgot the misfortune that had caused his tears to flow. Rosalia folded in his

paternal embrace, returned the caresses that filled her with ecstacy. Insensible to all but her present happiness, she could not however be unmindful of the author; with gratitude she named Vincent Montaldi.

Various were the emotions that agitated all present: the pause of admiration, the look of expressive thanks, and the thought too big for utterance, were the mute plaudits bestowed on an act that repaid the performer in its performance. To do good was to obtain for Montaldi his own approval—an approval never bestowed unless highly merited.

Unsoured by calamity, unchecked by reflection, Vincent, in contributing to the happiness of another, felt his own considerably encreased, nor suffered the poison of envy to detract from that pleasure untasted by him: if thought had

given to his countenance a serious cast, it was not that his bosom was contracted, or gloomily impenetrable to the voice of joy.

The Senor di Bartolo, a second time indebted to the kindness of Montaldi, felt a weight of obligation almost insupportable, and the more so as every mode of return was prohibited.

The eyes of Ernesto were cast on his father with secret meaning, as if to reproach him with the suspicions he had harboured: the duca interpreted his look, and returned it with one similar; he pleaded guilty to the silent accusation, and acquitted in his own mind, one for whom he felt the highest respect.

The peaceful tranquillity of Laurentini's bosom was once more to become disturbed; the restoration of Rosalia, and through the medium of Montaldi,

revived a passion, if not totally extinguished, at least dormant, and she felt all her former tenderness return.

Ernesto, more than ever eloquent in his praise, listened with enthusiasm to the relation of Rosalia, and heard her recount his many virtues with an interest that did honor to his feelings.

Montaldi, the being he admired, was the author of his felicity; he had snatched the idol of his soul from a fate the most severe, preserved her from the most insupportable captivity, and nobly shrunk from thanks.

"This act, so like himself, has fully wiped off the foul tarnish I unjustly affixed to his character. Our last meeting—his companions, and the strange demolition of the casino, bespeak a mystery I would fain elucidate."

The disappearance of Astolfo and Pauliana; the unconnected sentence he attempted to utter, and the prevention that ensued, were events irreconcileable to Ernesto. The more he reflected, the more he became lost in conjecture.

Montaldi removed beyond the reach of any research he could make, defied his every effort.

Compelled to give up the pursuit, he would exclaim, "And why should I seek to penetrate his secrets? Is it not sufficient that I have proved him to be the most disinterested, as well as amiable of beings? Can I reflect on the bliss dealt me by his liberal hand, and yet doubt?—No; Rosalia, idol of my soul! in contemplating thy heavenly charms, I must per force yield gratitude to him who restored you to me. Can I behold

thy joy, venerable Di Bartolo—witness unmoved the rapture of a parent, and not bless him who has caused the change? Yes, I do most fervently; and for thy sake, had nearly envied the favoured Montaldi."

The ill-starred Vincent left to himself, in silent sadness pursued his solitary way.

Unmindful of his path, he hurried on, save when he paused to enjoy in imagination, the return of Rosalia. Then would he loiter till busy memory, with all the gloom of retrospect, drove back the pleasing thought, and whispered what he was.

Yet why his haste? The hospitable welcome, or forced constraint of dissembling friends, promised not to reward his speed—no voice, save that of despair,

noted his approach. Unnoticed and forsaken by all, he roamed a listless wanderer. No scene by circumstance endeared, claimed from him the smile of recognition; dreary and desert, each spot presented images that borrowed their hue from his yet more malignant fate. But there was a moment he longed to call back—a moment that he retraced with rapture. It was that in which he first beheld Laurentini; and without asking himself the reason, his unconscious feet conducted him in sight of the pallazzo.

He started—he caught a glimpse of the senora.

Riveted to the spot, he gazed with enthusiasm on her beauteous countenance.

She moved—he sighed—she was hid

from his view; and the wretched Montaldi relapsing into his usual dejection, began to accuse fate.

"Why am I thus doomed to suffer?" said he, turning from the spot. "'Tis beyond mortal endurance. And this the grant of life!—Double barbarity! refined cruelty! Take back your hateful gift, or teach me how to bear my wrongs.—Was it for this I bore the ills of fortune, tamely submitted to my own disgrace, and sealed permission to my doom?—Mean, abject act of foul disgrace! Death with all its terrors could not inflict a pang half so keen as that which rives my breast. Unwise exchange!—A moment's pain for a life of misery! Sure 'twas the deed of a coward to shrink ignobly from the blow, and bear with passive silence, the torture of revolving years.—Laurentini, beloved

object of my adoration! to think of thee is harmony; it quells the tempest of my soul. Hope, buoyant, yields the pleasing vision, and makes a paradise of unreal joy. Knew you the pangs of this fond bosom, you would not—nay, could not withold your pity; yet may you for ever a stranger prove to this heart's grief. Unceasing flow that selfish sorrow which would infect another with its plaint."

Laurentini, though blest with the society of Rosalia, still felt a painful void; pensive and sad, she in vain strove to appear cheerful. The effort was too painful, and her spirits became unusually depressed.

The Senora di Bartolo, though far from divining the real cause, could not but remark the alteration that daily

took place in her fair relation, and attempted to rally her on the subject with affected gaiety.

Laurentini refuted the charge, said she was never in better spirits, and to prove the truth of her assertion, imposed on herself the severe task of appearing gay, when in fact her heart was ill at ease.

Uncertain of Montaldi's fate, her thoughts continually reverted to him. At times, the high colouring of fancy represented him such as he seemed when urged by compassion, he supported the wounded Di Bartolo. The emanation of benevolence gave interest to his speaking countenance, and intelligence to the eye beaming with pity. She longed once more to behold him, to sooth his affliction, and, if possible, to remove it; but Laurentini gave not

utterance to the thought—she knew it to be vain, and her prospect became darkened. The approaching felicity of Ernesto afforded a brighter ray which served to illumine her chequered path, and bid her hope for a realization of those expectations that at present seemed fallacious.

The duca perceiving her melancholy in order to call off her attention, invit the gayest parties, and daily devised new plans of amusement.

Not insensible to this kindness, Laurentini mixed with the promiscuous group, and with seeming satisfaction, entered into the spirit of their pleasure.

The nobles vied with each other in their arts to please, each flattering himself with the conquest of the fair senora. The most indefatigable atten-

tion and refined flattery was unsuccessfully offered; the one diverted, while the other offended a heart not to be won by either.

The most incorrigible of Laurentini's tormentors was the Marquis Alonzo de Almanza.

This nobleman, possessed of much good-nature, and a persevering spirit, incessantly importuned the senora.

His assiduities would have been insupportable, but for the insinuating manners of the gentle Elvira, his sister, whose amiable qualities endeared her to Laurentini, and next to Rosalia, she was her favourite companion. A similarity of disposition rendered their amusements nearly the same, and could Elvira have beheld Laurentini the wife of Alonzo, her happiness would have

been supreme; but consummate bliss is not to be found, and the lovely Spaniard contented herself with bestowing the name of friend on one she would fain have called sister.

Senora Elvira was the bearer of a most pressing invitation from Donna de Almanza, her mother, to the fair cousins—an invitation they accepted, much to the satisfaction of the duca, as he hoped diversification of scene would enliven the melancholy Laurentini; in the society of friends, reflection would be banished, and the surrounding gaiety inspire cheerfulness.

The loud voices of the gondolieri proclaimed the approach of the duca's elegant gondola.

It was constructed with flags bearing his arms, decorated with emblematic

devices; cushions of pale blue satin covered the seats. The little party received the refreshing breeze under an awning, whose lightness and simplicity added to the fairy beauty of the scene.

The serenity of the atmosphere and the gentle flowing of the Arno, as the little vessel glided along its unruffled surface, lulled to repose every discordant passion, if such there were among the amiable group.

The spirits of Laurentini became exhilirated, and she owned the sweet influence. Rosalia caught the delightful contagion. Ernesto and Alonzo in familiar conversation beguiled the time, or paused to remark the surrounding objects; while the duca and the Senor di Bartolo in observing their pleasure, drew from thence an equal share.

At some distance they beheld the donna awaiting their arrival. She was seated in her casino, which being placed on a rocky projection, commanded a most extensive view. The gondolieri were ordered to row with the utmost dispatch.

The odoriferous scent of the orange groves breathed a delicious fragrance, at once the most refreshing.

Arrived at the building, they entered a vestibule, floored with white marble; a light painted ceiling shewed the beautiful simplicity of the sculptures that decorated the walls, which consisted of festoons of flowers in alto-relievo, executed in white marble, on a ground of grey, finely polished; from thence they passed into a small banqueting room of an octagon form; sofas were placed beneath the windows, shad-

ed with orange-trees and intermingled roses.

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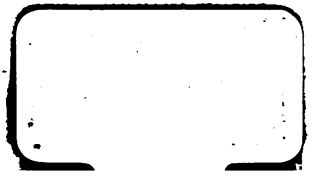
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